

NORMA'S FRIENDS

MARGUERITE
TURNER GEIBEL





Class PZ7

Book G 2.6

Copyright N^o No

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

NORMA'S FRIENDS
A Story of Talents



“HELLO, GIRLS !” CAME BETTY’S GREETING FROM THE ROOF OF THE GARAGE. — *Page 31.*

NORMA'S FRIENDS

A STORY OF TALENTS

By
MARGUERITE TURNEY GEIBEL

Illustrated by
FLORENCE J. HOOPES



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

51927

PZ
G26
No

Copyright, 1927,
BY LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

All rights reserved

NORMA'S FRIENDS

Printed in U. S. A.

Norwood Press
BERWICK & SMITH CO.
NORWOOD, MASS.

SEP 20 '27

©C1A1004244

I am a part of all whom I have met.—HOMER

CONTENTS

I.	ONE DAY IN MAY - - -	11
II.	BETTY DECIDES ON A CAREER -	30
III.	THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK BOX -	49
IV.	UNCLE HERBERT'S GIFTS - -	58
V.	THE PICNIC - - - -	74
VI.	BETTY BEGINS - - - -	89
VII.	SUMMER PLANS - - - -	95
VIII.	NORMA MIGRATES - - - -	110
IX.	"MAN IS SUPERIOR TO THE ELE- MENTS" - - - -	118
X.	THE HALEYS "AT HOME" - -	128
XI.	BLUE BELL - - - -	143
XII.	IN HIGH AT LAST - - - -	164
XIII.	ANNETTE'S VENTURE - - -	186
XIV.	THE NEW YEAR - - - -	203
XV.	BETTY'S GAME - - - -	218
XVI.	THE HALEYS, INCORPORATED -	229
XVII.	SOMETHING LONG AND GREEN -	251
XVIII.	JIMMY CREATES A JOB - - -	260
XIX.	THE HAUNTED HOUSE - - -	273
XX.	THE NEW HIGH - - - -	294
XXI.	A LETTER FROM UNCLE HERBERT	307
XXII.	THE SECRET OF THE BLACK BOX -	313

ILLUSTRATIONS

“Hello, girls!” came Betty’s greeting
 from the roof of the garage (Page
 31) - - - - - *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

“Keep the crowd back!” the guard
 ordered sharply - - - - 84

Pulling off her own shabby sweater,
 Blue Bell wrapped it around her
 stick - - - - - 160

A procession of people carrying their
 contributions - - - - - 194

They carried Betty off the court - - 226

The three crept to the top of the stairs
 and waited - - - - - 288

NORMA'S FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

ONE DAY IN MAY

THE schoolroom was full of sunshine, for the windows faced the south, and it was nearly three o'clock on a glorious May day.

"Shall we have the shades drawn? Any one object to the sun?" Miss Rice asked, looking down the rows of those nearest the windows.

"No! No! No!" The "noes" seemed to continue for a full minute. In May, sunshine is too precious to be denied admittance. Later in the summer one may, perhaps, draw a shade, but not in May, no matter how glaring the sunlight.

"All right!" Miss Rice, a faded but sweet-looking blonde, smiled, then turned briskly to Joseph Campagna. "You may read, Joseph!"

Unwillingly Joseph, a shy little Italian,

dragged himself from his seat, buttoned his coat to hide a none-too-clean shirt, and looked intently at the page, as if it would read itself, if given time.

Norma St. Clair squirmed. She had hoped Joseph would not have to read to-day.

“These men were dependent for their sub—sub ——” Joe stopped and looked helplessly at Miss Rice.

“His eyes are just like a nice big dog’s,” Norma thought, “always pleading for kindness.” Her serious brown eyes were melting with pity.

“Subsistence,” Miss Rice prompted. “Joseph, surely a big boy in eighth grade should be able to say that word.” She sighed in despair. It *was* hard to listen to Joseph’s reading.

“Subsistence,” Joseph mumbled, his head lowering behind the history book used for reading lessons,—“on the tropical fruit of the island they had discovered,” he brought out slowly.

Norma felt her own cheeks burning at the rebuke which Joseph had suffered. Poor

Joseph! He looked so pathetic, and felt so embarrassed when corrected. Norma could not see why Miss Rice never appeared to notice it; she was kind enough, but had no patience with Joe's slow reading. It made Norma squirm, too, but chiefly out of pity, and only partly because it was tiresome to listen.

"If they'd just let him alone," Norma thought, twisting a tight dark curl in her distress, "and not try to teach him to read swiftly and with expression. He can't, anyway. Poor Joseph!" She glanced at the Hiawatha calendar. A little over two weeks until Flag Day, when Joseph would have an appropriate drawing on the board.

"Get ready for painting lesson," Miss Rice commanded, and the history books used for reading disappeared as if by magic, with a series of little soft thuds as they dropped into place. When books were put away promptly, it meant the next lesson was a welcome one.

There was always a special stir on Friday afternoon just before painting lesson. It was the last lesson on the last day of the week, and was considered a treat because it only came

once a week, and because everybody loved to daub in paints.

Glancing over at Joseph with the tiny smile she always wore when she looked at him, Norma saw that he was sitting very straight, almost smiling. He had forgotten the reading lesson and the shirt he tried to hide because Miss Rice had spoken once, before the whole class, of his untidiness.

The door opened, and Miss Jameson, the lively little painting-teacher, in her inevitable green dress, stepped in. One day she had come all dressed up for some affair,—and the new dress had been green, too. Norma and her best friend, Elaine McDonald, had been disappointed. “I wonder if it’s because she told us once that green is nature’s color and goes with anything?” Norma had asked, and Elaine had agreed that that was probably the reason.

In Miss Jameson’s hand were three pussy-willows and two yellow daffodils. “Aren’t they pretty?” she inquired with a smile, holding them up. “Who knows why they’re so lovely together?”

Instantly Joseph's hand shot up. "Because the grey and brown are neutrals, and the yellow is so bright," he offered.

"You remembered about the neutral colors, didn't you, Joseph? Joseph doesn't forget things," she told the class, nodding her head with satisfaction, as much as to say, "I told you so."

This time Joseph flushed with pleasure, and looked about shyly, unaccustomed to being the object of so much approval. As his eyes met Norma's, he smiled. Miss Jameson had remembered his name, and she didn't remember many names—couldn't, with a new class every half-hour, and all the different schools to teach. Both Joseph and Norma knew that she had remembered his name because he was one of her best pupils.

Elaine passed out the tin paint-boxes and filled the tiny cups with water.

Turning to the blackboard, Miss Jameson tried the little bouquet, first alone, then with white paper back of it. The white paper made the pussies stand out better, the class decided.

"How large can you make them on your

paper?" Miss Jameson asked. "Their natural size?"

"About one - fourth," Joseph answered promptly.

"Right," Miss Jameson approved, "because the pussy-willows are long." She drew them, on the proper scale, beside the bouquet which she had pinned on the blackboard molding, gave a few instructions concerning the mixing of colors and shading, and everything grew still.

If Joseph painted with his tongue in his cheek, the habit did not adversely affect his work.

Though it looked so easy to make three brown stems for the pussies, tack on the soft little grey ears, then make two green stems and the golden cup of the daffodils, Norma surveyed her work ruefully when it was finished. "If only there had been time to do it over!" she thought. "It's messy."

"Pass in your work," Miss Rice said, taking charge again. "The papers will be marked, and you may have them Monday. Get ready for dismissal," she added, and there was an

instant of shuffling, then an almost electric silence, as if all were ready to spring when she should speak, as indeed they were, for it was May, and there was an inviting outdoors just the other side of those four walls.

The class filed out in order, but, on reaching the street, rent the air with their shrieks. Everybody was calling or talking or yelling, just because it was good to be alive, and free, and out in the air of a May day.

“Look, Elaine!” Norma rejoiced, holding her friend back by the elbow. “Here’s a caterpillar, and there’s a little dust on the sidewalk. Isn’t it nice to have dust on the sidewalk again, instead of snow?”

Elaine laughed in agreement. “M-m-m, it’s good to get out. Less than a month until vacation. S’pose we’ll both pass all the exams, Norm? Wouldn’t it be *terrible* if one of us didn’t?” she inquired, making a tragic face.

“Silly! You know we shall. We always have,” Norma reminded cheerfully, if a trifle illogically.

“Oh! You’re smart. I didn’t mean *you*,”

Elaine amended hastily. "You're good in everything."

"Not in painting. Did you see that daub I made? Wasn't it awful? There, I'm saying 'awful' again, and Mother says I must not say it so often, or I won't be able to talk properly."

"Oh, Elaine!" Norma exclaimed on inspiration. "Wouldn't it be nice if we didn't have to go to the classes where we're doing the best work? I get so tired of sitting there, counting windows, when things are repeated over and over again. I wish we could pass in one subject at a time, instead of all together!"

"You would have been in high-school English long ago," Elaine suggested loyally.

"And Joseph would have been doing high-school painting and drawing and writing," Norma added, catching the spirit of the school reform they were instituting. "I heard Miss Jameson tell Miss Rice that Joseph's writing was like copper-plate engraving. Wouldn't it be grand if we could go ahead as fast as we're able, instead of having everybody wait for

everybody else? I believe every one would pass in something."

"We shouldn't be together so much," Elaine objected cautiously, "but we shouldn't have to sit still so long, waiting for the whole class to learn. I don't see why the bright ones and the dumb ones are all put in one class."

They walked along slowly, arms about each other's waists, Norma's brown curls close to Elaine's honey-colored, fluffy, bobbed head, until they reached the street on which Norma lived, an old street in an old town, its large trees, large yards, and wide-open verandas testifying to its age.

"Come over to my house, Norma," Elaine asked coaxingly.

"Have to go home first. I'll see if I can. 'Bye."

"Face tag!" Elaine responded, and was gone.

Reluctantly Norma turned up the walk to her very dignified home of grey stone, set back from the street. It was really too nice a day to go in, even for a minute, but that was the rule—home first after school.

“Hello, Daughter,” her mother greeted, smiling at Norma’s slow steps. “Got spring fever? You look as if you didn’t want to come in.”

Mrs. St. Clair, in her high-back chair by the window, laid down a magazine,—one of the “grown-up” ones that Norma never read—no pictures in it, ever. “What did you do in school to-day?”

“Painted. It’s Friday, you know, and Joseph painted the most beautiful pussy-willows and daffodils. You just ought to see them, Mother! You’d be surprised.” She looked about the room. “It’s better than any of the paintings we have,” she added enthusiastically, warming to her task of giving Joseph his due.

“I think, from what you tell me, that he must be another Michael Angelo,” her mother said seriously. “Michael was one of the best ever, you know,—and Italian, too,” she added quickly, as Norma’s lips framed themselves for a question.

“Do you think so, Mother?” Norma asked, frowning in the effort to grasp the signifi-

cance, and never once doubting her mother's sincerity.

"It's possible," Mrs. St. Clair assured her pleasantly, and, because the subject did not seem so important to her as it did to Norma, who felt an intense pity for the unhappy Italian boy, changed the topic of conversation. "I see, by the way you stand there, that you are thinking of going over to Elaine's or Betty's. You might get me some strawberries. They're an extravagance, but it's just the sort of day for strawberry shortcake, and Katy hinted that she would like to make one."

"All right," Norma agreed, and departed to her room on a mysterious errand.

She closed her door, took from the little maple desk which had been a present on her tenth birthday, a sheet of note-paper, and wrote:

"You will probably be another Michael Angelo. Some one who knows said so."

Forgetting that an unsigned note was in bad

taste, Norma omitted the signature, folded the note, concealed it in her pocket, and started off with the money her mother gave her for strawberries. Joseph usually hung around his uncle's fruit store.

"Yoo-hoo!" the girl called when she had reached the yellow brick house, in the block around the corner, where Elaine lived.

At the familiar call, Elaine bounded out.

"I'm going to the fruit store. Walk down with me?" Norma invited.

Elaine did the talking, while Norma wondered whether Joseph would be in the fruit store on a nice day like this, when there were so many attractions outside. Then, too, there was the problem of getting the note to Joseph without Elaine's seeing it. Of course it was not anything to be ashamed of, but it was just for Joseph, and would not be an easy thing to explain, even to Elaine.

Once when Norma had talked of Joseph at home, her father had said, "He will probably grow up and dig ditches." Norma had worried ever since, for her father must know what he was talking about. Joseph must not

dig ditches; he *must* be an artist. People did not understand how important that was. Joseph liked pretty things. Ugh! Fancy his working in a horrid ugly sewer, digging clay that would stick to his feet, and looking ashamed when acquaintances passed!

When Miss Rice was cross with him, Norma wanted to say: "Please don't hurt his feelings. It's so easy to hurt Joseph's feelings." But of course she could not say anything; people did not do such things. The class would laugh, and Miss Rice would stare. It was not like scolding Charlie Hall; he just laughed—had no feelings, Norma guessed.

With vast relief, Norma saw that Joseph was at the store. Some of his paintings and drawings were on the wall, probably because he had more samples of his work than his own small home would accommodate.

Instinctively Norma picked out the reddest strawberries, then wandered about while they were being wrapped, trying to get away from Elaine and near Joseph. She could not get the note into his hand, for Elaine had looked around, but Norma managed to drop it, and

Joseph saw it fall and caught Norma's meaning look.

"Come on, Elaine," she called happily, "let's hurry, so we can walk to the park." Oh, what a relief to get rid of that note! She wished she might have seen Joseph's face when he read it. He would read very slowly, and then would look pleased, like a dog when it is petted,—as he did when Miss Jameson praised his work before the class. She fell to wondering whether he would know who Michael Angelo was—but of course he would, an Italian!

Over Norma's desk at home was a framed picture—the best thing he ever had done. Joseph had sent it on Valentine's day, carefully wrapped in sheets of cheap tablet paper. It was her own likeness; she was wearing a red cape, her rain cape, and Joseph had made her look like Little Red Riding Hood. Norma was flattered beyond words. She had framed the picture, and wished she might tell him so, but they never had spoken, never held any conversation. Somehow their bond of sympathy and admiration did not call for words.

“Let’s take the berries home, and then walk down to the river, Elaine,” Norma suggested, and Elaine readily assented.

On the way to the park which lay along the river, they found a gutter stopped with soft mud, and, taking long sticks, cleared it out, enjoying the rush of water into the opening they had made.

“They’ve got the benches out again, Norma. Pretty soon we can have picnics,” Elaine reminded gayly.

“I wish you were my sister,” Norma returned. “I hate going home alone. You have a brother and a sister, but I have to do my lessons alone, and haven’t anybody to talk to,—except grown-ups, of course, and they don’t always count.”

Later, when Norma’s wish for companionship was granted in a peculiar way, she thought of what she had told Elaine. For once, Elaine found no suitable answer ready for her friend, had no suggestion to make. She had always thought of Norma as self-sufficient, all-wise, not needing any one. Now, it appeared, Norma was lonely.

The two stood on the stone bridge that spanned the river at its narrowest point, and watched the water rush on, as if anxious either to see what lay just ahead, or to know its fate. Hand in hand they sauntered back home along the path that followed the willows, close to the river-bank.

“Violets!” Elaine exclaimed, darting into a clump of bushes. They picked the few stray flowers hidden there, and, as always with their treasures, divided them evenly.

“We’ll look for more to-morrow,” Norma announced when they had picked all but the buds.

“Look, Norma, quick!” Elaine ejaculated, pointing toward a rock in the river. “A rainbow!”

There, in the spray that formed as the water struck the rock, was the “rainbow of promise,” and the girls stopped to admire it before going home.

“Was the park pretty, Norma?” her mother asked, when Norma found her in the cheerful buff-and-white kitchen.

“Beautiful, Mother. We found these ——”

Before she could finish, the telephone rang insistently.

“ Watch the biscuits in the oven, Norma,” her mother cautioned. “ Katy’s setting the table,—and they’re nearly ready.”

From the hall her voice drifted back to the kitchen. “ Yes. Why! So suddenly! Yes, of course we’ll come on Sunday—sooner if you —— All right!”

Mrs. St. Clair hung up the receiver, and returned to the kitchen with a peculiar expression in her serious dark eyes.

“ Your father’s cousin Selina is dead,—pneumonia,” she said quietly.

“ Now what will Jimmy do?” Norma asked in an awed voice, her first thought for the boy “ Aunt ” Selina had adopted.

Abstractedly Norma’s mother took the biscuits from the oven before answering. They were golden brown and delightfully uneven on top; Katy never would make shortcake except as separate little sweetened biscuits.

“ Oh, undoubtedly his Uncle Arthur will take him now. His uncle’s wife did not want him when he was small, but now, of course,

he's larger, and there's no one else to take him. Aunt Selina has been good to him; made her own slender income do for both of them."

"Am I going Sunday?" Norma queried, holding a full cream-pitcher in both hands.

"If you care to," her mother replied. "Probably your father will drive."

There was a rumbling sound in the driveway, and, before the horn sounded, Norma was out of the kitchen and had jumped on the running-board. Mr. St. Clair, blond and contented-looking, entered, swinging Norma.

"Tomboys—both of you," Mrs. St. Clair reproved as they entered together.

"This is all the exercise Father gets, except golf," Norma pointed out, "and he would have lost his figure long ago if it hadn't been for swinging me."

They were seated at the table and Katy had served them, before Mrs. St. Clair told the news she had just received from Portland.

"I suppose his Uncle Arthur will take Jimmy?" Mr. St. Clair questioned, laying down his fork. He looked at his wife, as if she could decide that point readily.

“ I don’t know,” Norma’s mother answered slowly. She looked out the window, across the lawn which was turning a vivid green. “ I don’t know,” she repeated.

A sudden hope thrilled Norma, but she did not voice it until the next day.

“ I suppose,” Mrs. St. Clair added with a smile which Norma did not understand, “ it will depend on his Aunt Frances—and what’s in the black box.”

CHAPTER II

BETTY DECIDES ON A CAREER

“Look at that tomboy!”

Simultaneously, Norma and Elaine, on their way to Betty Haley's, turned to the direction in which the woman was looking, though she was not addressing them.

“She means Betty,” Norma whispered indignantly. “She's doing stunts again—falling off the roof, or something cute.”

Elaine giggled at Norma's shrewd guess, for the lively Betty seldom remained long in a state of equilibrium. “It was that cranky Mrs. Baxter. She's always criticising—even thinks girls shouldn't play basketball. She doesn't know how nice Betty is; there's always fun where she is, and she's good to every one.”

The girls crossed the street and entered the somewhat disreputable yard surrounding the Haleys' rambling house, that resembled a fussy brown hen in a straw nest. A neglected “For Sale” sign had been up so long it seemed a

part of the house, for no one ever paid any attention to it.

“Hello, girls!” was Betty’s greeting from the roof of the garage. “Glad you came. I’m fixing the roof; George just wouldn’t, and if we asked the landlord, he’d raise the rent, so I’m doing it. I don’t know what my mother would do without me.” All Betty’s strong teeth showed when she smiled; her freckles were in evidence at all times.

A few years back Norma had thought the freckles were caused by chewing gum, and had begged her mother for a similar privilege. In the girl’s mind, Betty’s freckles, her popularity, and her gum had somehow been hopelessly confounded as inseparable facts—cause and effect—and all desirable. If Betty chewed gum and had freckles, it must be the thing to do. In Norma’s youthful mind, too, had been a fixed idea that Betty was beautiful, in spite of green-grey eyes and a too-generous nose.

“I don’t see how you can stand up on that roof, Betty,” Norma exclaimed, looking up with fear and admiration in her eyes.

"It hardly slopes at all. I've been up on top of the house," Betty stated, not boastingly, for it was too much a matter of course.

"Let's play basketball," Elaine suggested, "unless you're too busy, Betty. Does Ernest mind if we use the ball?"

"No; we can play a while. I *was* going over to see Carma, but not till later this afternoon," she finished doubtfully.

Norma dreaded the "Carma spells," as she called them, when Betty, who was now in her first year in high school, refused to play with "children," which term included Norma and Elaine, who were "only" in eighth grade. At such times, Betty pinned up her hair, wore her longest dresses, nodded briefly to the "children," and devoted herself to Carma, who was a sophomore and discussed such matters as boys, manicuring, and styles in hairdressing. The spells would last a while, then Betty's hair would be unpinned, her short dresses reinstated, and Betty would be "herself." And, oh, what a relief to her two younger chums! For when Betty was leader, there was action.

"Why do you bother with Carma Hart-

land?" Elaine asked plaintively. "You know you can have more fun with us."

"I'm older than you are, you know," Betty reminded, frowning dreamily. "I can't play kid games. I'll soon be grown up."

"Mother says when we're grown up, we're grown up a long, long time, but we're only children for a while," Norma offered hopefully.

"I can't help growing up," Betty replied with the dignity she never could quite forget. "But I'll play basketball,—even college girls do that. Come on!" and she dropped gracefully from the roof of the garage and led the way to the gymnasium within what had been a barn until a disreputable car found shelter there.

Betty was herself.

"We'll take turns making baskets, then we'll practise passing. You first, Norma," she directed, tossing the ball to Norma, who leaped awkwardly and missed it.

"Aim carefully. Hold the ball straight in your two hands, and keep your eye on the basket. Throw it high enough and hard

enough to carry it above the basket so it will drop in."

In spite of Betty's explicit directions, her friend missed.

"Take two more turns. We'll each take three," Betty encouraged.

Twice again the girl missed, and Elaine did no better.

Betty made two baskets out of three. "It takes a lot of practice," she explained. "I'm going to try for the high-school team next year; this year I wasn't allowed to, because freshmen aren't permitted on any of the teams."

For twenty minutes they played, Norma and Elaine awkwardly, Betty more skillfully, patiently explaining to the girls wherein they failed.

A sudden clanging outside, and Betty dropped the ball which she had been about to pass to Norma. "A fire! Let's go, girls!"

Nothing loath, they hurried to the street, just as the fire-engine approached.

"Oh, Betty! Look, look, look! Adele Baxter is coming across. Stop, Adele, stop!" Elaine called.

But Adele, aged three, had dropped an apple and was bent on rescuing it. The noise of the engine and the clanging of the bell confused her. The driver applied his brakes in time to avoid striking her, but the huge truck swung around until the rear end threatened her, and the thoroughly frightened child was running directly in its path. It seemed inevitable that the child would be caught under the rear wheel. Then, like a flash, Betty darted out, reached up to the ladder with her right hand, and, with her left, caught Adele by the neck of her dress and held her until the machine came to a stop.

A crowd had appeared by that time, as ants appear from the ground when their home is threatened; a few hasty words, partly thanks to Betty, partly warning to the child, and the firemen were on their way.

Mrs. Baxter, coming out of the store, her face drawn with terror, pushed through the crowd and caught up Adele.

“What happened?” she asked, her voice unsteady, her eyes wild. “Some one told me Adele was hurt? She’s—she’s all right?”

"You can thank Betty Haley for that. Those dumb firemen just sat there, and waited for the youngster to go under the wheels," a loquacious barber offered. "Betty got out there quicker than I can tell it, hung onto the ladder with one hand and grabbed the youngster with the other. She hung on until the engine stopped skidding. I call that nerve. Too many of the girls is brung up ——"

But no one was listening, for every one was talking, except Mrs. Baxter, who was too much concerned, and Adele, who was dazed. Mrs. Baxter tried to thank Betty.

"Oh, it's nothing! I climb around like a cat, anyway," Betty deprecated. "I do harder tricks than that every day."

Reluctantly the crowd dispersed when there was no more to hear. By night, the story had improved wonderfully. There had been a machine coming the other way. The child was bound to be hit by one. Betty had darted between them. The truck was going full speed when it skidded. The driver had not seen the child at all. Adele had been dragged twenty feet, and was unconscious when Betty picked

her up, just as a wheel was about to pass over her.

While the crowd was busy enlarging on the incident, Betty and her friends returned to the garage.

“S’pose you’ll get a medal, Betty?” Elaine queried solemnly.

“No! Just for that? I wasn’t afraid. I knew what I was doing,” Betty scoffed.

“Nobody else did it. There wasn’t another second to spare,” Elaine insisted. “You are a hero—heroine,” she amended, “whether you get a medal or not.”

“Think I’d stand there and watch poor Mrs. Baxter’s only kiddie hurt or killed?”

Norma and Elaine exchanged significant glances, for the words reminded them of Mrs. Baxter’s “Tomboy!” uttered in scornful tones.

They were thinking much the same things,—the tomboy had a strong right arm to hold to the ladder, and a strong left to swing the child out of danger. She had thought and acted quickly—from practice and confidence. Betty could hang by her teeth from a trapeze,—or

by her heels or her chin or her toes, for that matter.

Coming out of a reverie, Betty made an announcement. "I think I'll be a gymnasium teacher."

"Why not start one this summer for children? You have the garage," Norma suggested eagerly.

"You could make money," Elaine added with enthusiasm.

"Betty! Betty!" came a tired voice from the house.

"Coming, Mother!" Betty responded cheerfully. "Come on in with me, girls," she begged. "I want some one to talk to; I think Mother wants me to help her."

The girls awaited no second invitation, for, like every normal human being that ever lived, they loved to get into other people's houses,—other homes; to experience the new atmosphere that is peculiar to every home, the "feel" of a house. Some are warm and friendly; some cold, neat, precise, and unemotional; others are neat, orderly and yet inviting, lacking the touch-me-not look of the too precise house.

There is the disorder that means life and action; the disorder that means carelessness. The kind of books lying about tell a whole story in themselves,—trashy stuff for melodramatic minds, wholesome books and magazines that indicate a live interest in current affairs, heavy solemn ones that announce the presence of the thinker and dreamer. There is the combination of the two latter that typifies the highest class—the aggressive thinker, active, abreast of the times.

The atmosphere in some homes seems thin; in the Haley house it fairly tingled with the interests of five young people, of whom Betty was the youngest.

“I wish you’d peel some of these vegetables, Betty. I’m going to order my supplies for to-morrow. Come in, girls,” she added hospitably, as the girls hesitated.

In the big brown kitchen Betty pulled forward chairs for her friends, and seated herself on a brown stool before the ugly iron sink.

“Put an apron on,” Mrs. Haley admonished, smoothing down her faded locks with a work-roughened hand.

"I'm going to start a gymnasium, Mother," Betty began with enthusiasm.

"Did you see what happened, Mrs. Haley?" Elaine queried. "Betty ran out and saved Adele Baxter just as a fire-truck was about to pass over her,—the best stunt she ever did."

Mrs. Haley looked wistfully and fondly at Betty, whose athletic prowess and optimism were always a source of wonder to her shrinking, worried mother.

"I'm going to start a gymnasium," Betty repeated, shaking a potato around in the water, to remove the dust.

"How can you do that?" Mrs. Haley questioned in a discouraging voice, turning from the doorway where she had been about to depart.

"Oh, we have lots of gym things,—basketball and trapeze and punching-bag and Indian-clubs. Ernest wouldn't mind if I took care of things. I'm going to make money this vacation,—teach the youngsters while their mothers go out."

"You'd soon tire of it. No one would want to pay for your nonsense, child. Ernest

wouldn't want his things knocked around by the youngsters," she summed up.

Norma felt her spirits go down. There was a familiar ring about the conversation, as if she had heard it before. Not just this subject, of course, but other things the Haley brood had wanted to do, and, in her discouraging way, Mrs. Haley had squashed them. It was not unkindness, but, simply because of her own lack of vitality, she could not see the ability of her children to overcome obstacles.

There was something discouraged-looking about the brown kitchen—a don't-care air. Norma named it "It-isn't-worth-while." The whole house showed a lack of organized effort, yet there were things that jumped out at one in unexpected places. Norma had blazed inside once when some one had referred to the Haleys as "common." Betty had been her friend for years, and she found the Haleys interesting, even to the point of wishing she might be one of their lively brood. Every Haley seemed wonderful, except, perhaps, the tired mother.

Mr. Haley, slow, quiet, seemed to know

everything, from the early history of the Irish to the kind of soil in every State in the Union. With a guilty feeling of disloyalty, Norma had admitted to herself occasionally that he knew more than her father; then she would comfort herself with the thought that her father knew banking and laws and estates and business conditions. He—he—what was the word? Specialized. He said every one should specialize; that when people did not succeed it was because they did not pick out one thing—the *right* thing for their qualifications—and stick to it. He loved to classify people in a few words,—a Jack-of-all-trades, a dreamer, a routine man, a born executive, a man with no initiative. Because she felt that he would have little patience with the Haleys,—might even call them shiftless,—Norma had carefully avoided mentioning them in connection with their talents or ambitions.

Mrs. Haley returned in a short time, to find that Betty had finished.

“Anything else, Mother?” she inquired.

“I think Daphne didn’t make her bed. You might do that. She’s gone to the special art

exhibit, and wanted to be there when it opened. You know what she is where art is concerned."

Norma remembered something. "I always forget to ask you, Betty, if your father is related to the Haleys in Illinois. There was a senator there Mother used to know."

"Mr. Haley's people lived in Illinois," Betty's mother offered interestedly.

"I think his first name is Herbert," Norma added doubtfully.

"Yes—there was an Uncle Herbert, but we've lost track of all Mr. Haley's people. He left Illinois when he was just a boy. I wonder if it *is* the same man?" she mused.

"If it is," Betty predicted, "Daphne will want us to put on more style. Come on up with me, girls. I'll fix her room."

The girls followed, and entered a room that appeared not to be a part of the house. The hand of Daphne showed everywhere. There were inexpensive but dainty drapes at the window, a discarded chair covered with yellow denim and appliqued with brown-eyed susans, a grey enamel bed and dresser that she had decorated herself, prints of good pictures on

the walls,—a room of sunshine and harmony, the room of some one who loved a sanctuary.

“Daphne’s room is pretty,” Elaine admired.

“When our ship comes in, I’m going to have a prettier one, but Daphne says she would have to plan it for me; I might make a mistake in my color-scheme. Oh, wouldn’t that be terrible!” Betty threw her arm over her eyes and shuddered so affectedly that the girls laughed.

Norma remembered that the Haleys frequently used the phrase, “When our ship comes in”; it invariably reminded her of the saying her father loved: “You needn’t expect your ship to come in unless you have sent one out.”

“Look at *my* room,” Betty commanded dolefully, as they stopped before the door in passing down the hall. “Annette and I are always going to fix it up, but I haven’t the money, and Annette seems to need all hers for her clothes.”

The room was indeed characterless, containing a maple bed and dresser, a brown walnut chair in need of refinishing, clothes in evidence,

a honeycomb bedspread, a rag carpet, and limp curtains.

“Look at the boys’ room; it’s part gymnasium and part news-stand,” she characterized briefly. Scattered about were trophies that Ernest had won,—a chest of silver, pennants, tennis-racket, and a football. “He won’t let any one use his silver; keeps it in his room.”

She opened the chest and showed shining rows of unused cutlery. There were pictures of teams on the walls,—basketball, football, and baseball. At head and foot an iron bed supported pennants of gorgeous colors but doubtful decorative value. There were law books, a small encyclopedia, a physical-culture journal, and a “highbrow” magazine in evidence.

“Here’s Ernest’s gold medal in mathematics,” said Betty, indicating a beribboned medallion hanging from the wall. “He has a silver one he got for two years of honor work, and the gold medal is for three. He got a fourth-year honor, too, but they only give two medals in one subject to one person. Father says it’s a shame he doesn’t use his head for figures, instead of selling in a sporting-goods

store, but he knew all the athletes in the city, and Baldwin's offered him the place because of that; it brings in customers."

They descended the carpeted and somewhat scuffy stair. The whole house was like an untidy laboratory of humanity; healthy youth, brains, and ambition stood about in it like bottles without labels or directions for use. The disorder was the result of mental conflict,—wanting to do one thing and doing another. There were signs of aspirations and laziness fighting for supremacy, and somewhere a cause for it all,—a negative thought persisted in, a too-easy philosophy. The inhabitants seemed as though composed of chemicals that would not mix without the proper medium.

"What does Annette do?" Norma queried with the deep respect she felt for any one as grown-up as Betty's older sister.

"She's a filing clerk," Betty replied.

"What's that?" Elaine wanted to know. It sounded tremendously important.

"Oh, she puts away letters in the right places in a file. Every customer has a number, and a little card tells what the number is. She

knows just where to find them when they're wanted, anyway," Betty finished vaguely. "Stenographers get more money, so she's going to take a course in shorthand some day. She says so many are poor at spelling and grammar and punctuation that there's always room for a good one. My, it's fun having your own money and paying your board, and then doing as you please with the rest. That's why Ann doesn't start the stenography course. She would have to stop work for a few months."

"What's Daphne going to be?" Norma pursued.

"Oh, some kind of artist, of course! She says she isn't going to sit around and talk about doing things,—that was a crack at Ernest and George and Annette,—she's going to *do* them. Daphne thinks she has more get-up-and-go than the others," Betty explained delightedly. "I don't care; I'm going to be a gym teacher; I'm sure of *that*."

"Maybe George takes after your Uncle Herbert, if he *is* your uncle. George won debates and things, didn't he?" Norma questioned, for she felt an insatiable curiosity con-

cerning the careers of Betty's brothers and sisters.

“ Yes, Father says all his people had the gift of gab. George loves law and reads law books, but he'd have to take a regular university course to be admitted to the bar,—that's what they say when a man gets to be a lawyer,” she explained. “ It sounds funny, but it's all right. George is selling insurance and doing pretty well, but Father says he ought to look ahead a little.”

“ Let's go out and see how you could fix the yard and garage for your gymnasium,” Norma suggested, for she dearly loved plans, and felt it was Betty's turn to start her career. Indeed, she felt honored in being allowed to listen to Betty's discussion of the things that lay nearest the hearts of the five Haleys.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK BOX

ON Sunday morning, when Norma climbed into the back seat of the St. Clairs' car, for the fifty-mile drive to Portland, she admitted to herself that it did not seem one bit like starting for a funeral. It was the fate of Jimmy Rogers that held her thoughts. Jimmy had been left by his mother to her friend, Cousin Selina St. Clair, who had lived with Mrs. Rogers ever since her husband's death; that was when Jimmy was three. Cousin Selina had an income of her own, and the home was Jimmy's; they were attached to one another, and so had lived together until the woman's sudden death.

As far back as Norma could remember, Jimmy's visits had been a source of delight to her, and he always seemed to leave some tangible token of his good-will. Once he had built her dog a kennel; another time he had built a swinging seat and suspended it from the

horse-chestnut tree in the back yard; he had even planed the drawer of her precious desk when it had stuck. She liked his light-brown curly hair and fair skin, and the smiling mouth that showed even teeth; his grey eyes were kindly and serious. Jimmy had not teased, and had not treated her as if she were *just* a girl.

Norma looked down at the box of flowers on the seat beside her; it meant that Jimmy had not a home any more,—unless his uncle's wife would not think he was a bother, now that he was sixteen.

When they stopped before the spick-and-span grey-and-white house, the girl half expected to see Jimmy run out, as he always had. Inside everything was quiet. Jimmy glanced at her as if he did not really see her. It was surprising to see him much taller, and wearing long trousers.

It was a relief when it was all over and they rode back to the house that had been Jimmy's home. The reading of the will bored Norma,—most of it,—for nothing seemed really to matter except what would become of Jimmy. Mr. St. Clair was appointed executor and the

boy's guardian. The house had belonged to Jimmy's parents, and so, of course, was his. Cousin Selina had little to leave, for she had depended on a yearly income which stopped at her death,—insurance of some sort. The will mentioned a black box which the boy's mother had requested should not be opened until he was eighteen. Apparently it held whatever else Mrs. Rogers had left to her son.

“It's all nonsense, not opening that black box,” Jimmy's Aunt Frances declared emphatically, a calculating light in her cold blue eyes.

“If it's the will of the boy's mother, it will be carried out,” the lawyer stated evenly, looking sharply at the aunt, who, he knew, had never bothered with her husband's nephew.

Evidently ashamed of his wife's interference, the boy's Uncle Arthur put in hastily, “I think his mother bought stock that was no good, and didn't want it known.”

The aunt appeared to lose interest on hearing this, and seemed impatient to have the scene over with.

Mr. St. Clair cleared his throat. He was

usually very sure of himself, but Norma knew he was embarrassed at having to discuss before Jimmy what must be said now.

“What of the boy’s future?” he asked slowly.

Jimmy, his face flushed, did not look up. His Uncle Arthur squirmed and looked unhappy.

“I can take care of myself,” Jimmy interrupted in a low voice, without looking at any one.

“Mrs. St. Clair and I have talked the matter over, and will be glad to look after the boy until he is twenty-one,” Norma’s father went on, “if that is satisfactory to every one.”

Norma felt her heart thump. Oh, how she had wanted Jimmy for a brother—always! She glanced quickly at the boy’s uncle. Suppose some one objected. She held her breath, but felt relieved when Aunt Frances began picking up her wraps. It did not seem possible they would not want Jimmy. At the door, Jimmy’s uncle stopped long enough to say in an embarrassed way, “Let me know if there’s anything I can do,” and left with his wife.

"I can work," Jimmy stated when the door had closed.

"Eventually, Son," Mr. St. Clair replied. "In the meantime suppose we rent this house and you come and live with us? The rent will pretty nearly cover your expenses, if that's what's worrying you. I think you can make yourself useful and earn a little on the side, so that you will be as independent as you please," he finished tactfully, placing his hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

"I hadn't thought about renting the house," said Jimmy, brightening considerably at the idea. "I'm grateful to you and Aunt Alice for wanting to take me. I—I—appreciate it." He looked questioningly at Norma's mother, who smiled a welcome.

"We want you, Jimmy," Mrs. St. Clair said. "Come home with us for a few days; then you can finish school here, since there are only a few weeks left of the term. You can stay here during the school-days and come home week-ends. Next year you can attend Newbury High School. Now run along and pack."

“By the way, Jimmy, where is the black box?” Mr. St. Clair asked casually. “In the desk, I suppose?”

At the hall-door Jimmy hesitated. “Why, I’m not sure.” He walked over to the fine old secretary which had belonged to his grandfather, and searched through pigeonholes and shelves in vain, finding only the small key on a red ribbon.

“I’ll look in the clothes-closets and dresser-drawers,” he announced, starting up the stairs.

In twenty minutes Jimmy came down with a suitcase. “I looked everywhere. I guess no stranger will find it, if I can’t,” he concluded, setting down the heavy black suitcase.

At that, Mr. St. Clair and Norma joined in the search,—pantry, bookcases, sideboard, everywhere that a black tin box might be concealed.

“Did you look in the summer kitchen?” Mrs. St. Clair asked, as they returned from the kitchen, looking somewhat disconcerted.

“Yes, but there’s nothing there,” Jimmy replied. “Aunt Selina certainly couldn’t have taken up the floor.”

“You don’t think she put it in a safe-deposit box at the bank?” Norma’s father inquired, for that seemed to him the reasonable, natural place for it.

“No, she always hid it around the house, but changed the hiding-place occasionally. I just don’t happen to know where the last one was,” Jimmy stated.

“Well, as you say, Jimmy, if we can’t find it, it isn’t likely any one else can,” Norma comforted. “Suppose it’s *never* found,” she suggested mysteriously.

“We really should be starting home,” Mr. St. Clair hinted, looking at his watch. “Let’s go over every room again, each one looking where he hasn’t looked before, as a check on one another’s detective powers.”

Another half-hour of search proved fruitless. The black box had become the mysterious black box.

The ride home that night Norma never forgot. Jimmy sat beside her in the rear of the car, his bag on the floor; he was actually going home with her, to be one of the family for several years at least.

To keep his mind from his recent sorrow, Norma told him of all the people he knew in Newbury, especially the Haleys, their ambitions, and the senator who might be their uncle.

"You'll be a junior in high school next year, won't you, Jimmy?"

"If I pass the exams next week," he conceded.

"Then what are you going to be?"

"An efficiency engineer—they eliminate waste and lost motion around factories and offices; find better ways of doing things," he explained.

Norma looked admiringly at him. She had often wondered how it felt to have a brother or a sister, and now she knew at least something of the feeling.

"I'll be in high school, too, you know," she reminded. "I'll expect you to take me to all the games."

"That won't be any hardship," Jimmy returned, "providing you let me explain them before, and not in the middle of the game."

As she watched the smile that played about his mouth, she suddenly remembered that if

Jimmy had been left in Portland, he would either be alone in his house, or at his Uncle Arthur's, where he was not wanted. Even the thought brought the tears to her eyes, and she turned away, that Jimmy might not see.

When she turned to her new "brother," she was smiling. "I'm glad you are coming home with us, Jimmy," she told him.

"Maybe you think I'm not glad!" Jimmy returned huskily.

CHAPTER IV

UNCLE HERBERT'S GIFTS

ONE warm June evening Norma ran up the steps of the Haley home to the veranda, where the seven Haleys happened to be at one time, though Annette and Ernest were about to leave.

“I’ve got news for you, Betty,—for all of you,” Norma added, stopping to get her breath. “Mother heard from your Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie,—she wrote them, you know,—and they *are* your relatives. Your Aunt Minnie says they may stop here on their trip East in a couple of weeks. She wanted Mother to give you the letter, as it will explain everything.”

From the pocket of her middy-blouse the girl fished out a letter and handed it to Mr. Haley. “Mother was going to call on the telephone, but I was coming over, anyway, with the letter, so I told her not to.”

She did hope they would not know she just could hardly wait to tell it and see the effect.

“The whole house will have to be fixed up,” Daphne pronounced promptly, before any one else had a chance to speak.

George was placing a chair for Norma, but she preferred to sit on the railing beside Betty, where she could face them all. When she felt a sly nudge, Norma remembered the day that Betty had predicted Daphne's words.

“We simply can't afford it,” Mrs. Haley objected quietly.

“With George and Annette and Ernest working, I don't see why we can't,” Daphne returned.

There was something surprising about Daphne's energy, for she did not look aggressive. She had a small, mild face that was misleading until one noticed that her mouth was firm and the dark eyes direct, as if going straight to the point. She looked more like her father than any of the other children did.

“It's easy for you to talk,” George defended for himself and the two others who worked. “Wait until you start earning money and

you'll see how many places there are for it. You go to school, dab in paints when you're home, and then try to tell the workers what to do with their money," he summed up in an injured tone. "If you were my daughter, you'd be spanked for it."

As he spoke he looked at Ernest and Annette for approval. They laughed delightedly at the neat way their brother had disposed of Daphne and her high ideas.

But Daphne ignored this with a challenging question. "You want them to think we're shiftless?"

"Daphne, you're always stirring things up," her mother remonstrated mildly, but uneasily. "I'm sure we aren't shiftless."

Daphne reached over and patted her mother's shoulder, quite as if their ages had been reversed.

"Things *need* stirring up, Mother, around here, and if we aren't shiftless, we surely don't do all we could do. George and Ernest made good records in school and let it stop there. Annette takes half the salary she could get, if she would put three months' work on prepar-

ing herself for something," Daphne pointed out. "Shiftless is a strong word, but you know what I mean."

Always, when the Haleys talked, Norma felt a deep interest, as if something was about to happen, and she almost prayed that she might be around when it did.

"Annette pays her board and buys her own clothes. When you're doing as much, it will be high time to criticize," Ernest declared.

Privately Betty had told her friend that Ernest protested that Annette was much too good-looking to work at all, and that he defended her "against all comers"—whatever that meant. Occasionally he informed the family that Bill or Fred or Charles had said Annette was a good-looking girl, or that she knew what to wear, or she had style. "He takes her everywhere he can," Betty had said, "to show her off."

As Norma watched Annette, she did not wonder that Ernest was proud of her. Her eyes were grey and nicely shaped, her face oval, her nose straight. She did have style and looks. Ernest himself was rather nondescript,

slaty eyes, a dull skin, and colorless hair, as near light-brown as anything else. Betty was the only real blonde.

“Four salaries in one house,” Daphne was saying. “You could get things if you wanted to. Couldn’t they, Father?” she appealed.

Mr. Haley’s eyes twinkled, and he rubbed his bald head before replying. “Leave me out of this. If there’s anything to be said, one of you five will be certain to think of it. That’s one of the doubtful advantages of being the parent of five youngsters— isn’t it, Mother?”

“I guess your Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie will know that it costs something to raise five children,” Mrs. Haley remarked. She seldom answered questions directly, and was as good at changing the subject as Daphne was at bringing it back to the main point.

“Couldn’t we have a new rug for the living-room?” Daphne began anew.

“Oh, I’ll do my share,” Ernest replied, glad to escape so easily. “Come on, Annette; the boat leaves at eight-fifteen.”

After they left, George felt himself to be the sole object of his sister’s attack.

"If Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie don't like the house, they can fix it up themselves," he opined lazily.

"It shouldn't be necessary for them to, and you should be the last one to suggest it," Daphne returned with asperity.

"What harm is he doing, Daphne?" Mrs. Haley queried in defense of her favorite.

"I just wish he had more ambition, Mother." Daphne sighed, and picked up the paper. "Shall I read to you, Father?"

Her father nodded. All day he used his eyes in poring over books, and when the observant Daphne noticed that it strained them to be used at night, she appointed herself reader.

"You can tell them I fixed the garage," Betty ventured, for she hated to see a lively discussion dropped.

"I think you're going to amount to something, Betty; if there's anything you *can* do, you try it." She had lowered the paper long enough to smile approvingly at Betty.

"That will be two of us," Betty replied in a sugary voice, "out of five."

Even Mrs. Haley smiled at the thrust, and George made a mental note to tell the absent Haleys when they should return.

Though Norma regretted that it was time to go home, she was deeply grateful for the opportunity of having witnessed the entire scene.

"Walk part way home with me, Betty," she coaxed.

With her usual energy, Betty bounded up. "Course," she agreed, and started down the street, her arm through Norma's.

"I hope it isn't going to be too much bother having a senator for an uncle," Betty remarked in a falsetto voice, then laughed with Norma. "How would you like to be a Haley?" she queried.

"I'd *love* it," Norma replied sincerely. "It's awfully tame when there's no one to argue with, but I'm going to start training Jimmy. He hasn't had any practice, either, you know."

The night before the distinguished Haley relatives arrived, Betty invited Norma in to see the new rug. Ernest, who had paid for

one-fifth of it, stood in the doorway with his hands in his pockets, looking, as Betty whispered, like the sole proprietor.

“I suppose we might have done more,—if we’d had time,” he remarked musingly, evidently pleased with himself.

Taken individually, the pieces of furniture in the Haley living-room were shabby, but, as a whole, Daphne’s redeeming hand showed. Daphne controlled such items as arrangement of pictures, banishment of bric-à-brac; Daphne unscrewed the bright overhead lights, so they could not be turned on to “show things up,” and conjured soft shades for the inexpensive lamps; Daphne re-upholstered worn chairs with remnants of good pieces bought for a song.

“Father says your uncle is rated at over two million dollars,” Norma informed them.

George whistled, and Mrs. Haley looked off, as if trying to visualize such a sum.

“I bet he’s tighter than the paper on the wall. They always are,” Ernest opined.

“If he is, he has a right to be,” Daphne returned meaningly.

Though the newly found Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie arrived the following morning, it was dinner-time before Mr. Haley and the three older children met them.

"It seems good to sit down with a big family at the table," Uncle Herbert beamed. "Things taste better. Of course," he apologized to Mrs. Haley, "it's hard on the house-mother."

"I'm used to cooking for seven," Mrs. Haley replied. "I don't mind a few more, and Daphne always helps with desserts and things. Betty sets the table."

"Yes, Daphne bosses the pretty things, like salads and desserts," Betty explained airily. "No one else could make them attractive enough. Artists have to have attractive food, you know," she informed them mincingly.

The subject of Betty's banter merely smiled.

"So Daphne is going to be an artist?" Aunt Minnie queried in her slow voice. Aunt Minnie was heavy, and seemed to have acquired the habit of doing everything slowly.

"What are the rest of you?" Uncle Herbert inquired interestedly. "It seems as if I

ought to know more about my own nephews and nieces."

"Ernest has a head for mathematics,—quick as a flash with figures," his father declared proudly. "If he had a chance somewhere, he would make a first-class expert accountant. They get big money, too."

"Is your work giving you any experience, Ernest?" his uncle questioned pointedly. It developed that Uncle Herbert had a keen way of going to the bottom of things.

"No, Uncle Herbert, that's just the trouble," Ernest answered seriously. "I have a pretty good job selling sporting goods, but there's no future in it,—unless I could buy the store," he added as an afterthought. "Mr. Baldwin says I have a head for business."

"George is going to be a lawyer," his mother began. "He won debates in school, and always has his nose in a book. He's selling insurance, and doing pretty well, but we think it's a shame he can't go to college." Mrs. Haley sighed regretfully.

"Are you still in school, Annette?" Aunt Minnie asked.

"No, I finished high school. I'm in an office," Annette informed her aunt briefly. Annette never wasted words.

"I say it's a shame we can't afford one lady," Ernest began, and Daphne and Betty exchanged winks. "Betty's a tomboy, and Daphne wouldn't keep still if she could, but I always said Annette ought to be the lady of the family."

"You think you can work and still be a lady? Is that it, Daphne?" Uncle Herbert inquired slyly, his eyes twinkling.

"I like to keep busy," Daphne replied, "and I think it more ladylike to be useful and independent than to be idle."

"If I read that statement in Africa, I'd say 'Daphne'!" George brought down his fist on his palm for emphasis.

Betty chuckled and nudged her father delightedly, for she gloried in her sister's definite character and positive ways.

"What sort of art work are you specializing in,—portraits? I suppose I might as well sit for mine now as any time, if you are," Uncle Herbert offered.

“ I’m not sure just what I’ll do,” Daphne returned thoughtfully. “ I’m not going to start out with the idea of being a great artist within a year, and I’m not going to sigh over Paris schools and travel. I’m going to get all I can here in Newbury and start with the small things. I’ll try all the branches—like dress-designing and commercial work, until I find my *metier*.”

Uncle Herbert looked at her closely, but did not reply.

“ After you get too big to be a tomboy, what are *you* going to be, Betty? ” he demanded.

“ A gymnasium teacher! ” the entire family chorused.

Every one laughed, and Betty looked somewhat abashed. She had intended telling it in a very dignified way.

“ There isn’t a day that she doesn’t tell us that she’s going to be a gym teacher,” Ernest explained to his uncle and aunt, who had guessed as much. “ I’m surprised that you haven’t heard it.”

As usual, Daphne rose to Betty’s defense, and told of her saving Adele Baxter, and of

all the stunts she had learned without breaking her neck.

“Well, it’s nice to have definite plans,” Uncle Herbert pronounced. “It’s the first step toward success. I’m going to be proud of you all,” he beamed. “The Haleys usually amount to something, and I predict that this batch will be better than the usual run.”

On the day the visitors left, Uncle Herbert made them all promise to write and let him know how they were getting on. “I have no children of my own to make me proud,” he reminded, “so you will have to make it up to me. I’m going to the bank,” he announced, looking at his watch; “then,” with a twinkle in his eye, “you’ll hear from me.”

When they had left, Betty paced the floor in mock anxiety. “This suspense is terrible. I’m completely unnerved.” That was the favorite saying of Mrs. Carpenter next door, and Betty used it, with variations, whenever she was particularly excited.

At four o’clock there came a ring at the door-bell, and Betty opened the door to two husky delivery-men, who set down a heavy,

handsome bookcase, and wiped their damp foreheads before asking, "Where'll we put it?"

"Why, I don't think it's for us," Betty began.

"Yup! Haley—245 Second Street," answered one of them, glancing at the tag.

That was the beginning. Heavy boxes continued to arrive, until, by dinner-time, when the entire family was present, commotion reigned.

"The canvases and drawing-paper and palette are for me. There's no question about that," Daphne affirmed.

"No one disputes you, Daphne. Get them out of the road," George admonished good-naturedly, as he lifted the volumes of a very complete and expensive encyclopedia from their box.

"Here are biographies of Franklin and Lincoln!" Ernest exclaimed. "Do you suppose we have to *read* all these things?"

George, prying at a fresh box, pulled away the paper protector inside. "Law books," he offered laconically, and immediately sat down

on the floor and began to read, in spite of his mother's protest that dinner was getting cold and must be eaten.

"They call this set the 'Rudiments of Art,'" Daphne remarked from her seat on the edge of a box, "but it seems to contain everything an artist would need to know—sculpture, furniture, birds, trees, conventional designs—um-m-m," her voice trailed off, as something arrested her attention.

"A course in accounting, Ernest," Mr. Haley announced, looking up from a book he had selected. "This must be for you."

"If you don't come to dinner immediately, I won't be responsible if the food is cold," Mrs. Haley threatened desperately.

At this ominous remark the Haleys seated themselves at the table.

"I guess the poetry and the encyclopedia are for you and me," Annette remarked consolingly to Betty.

"Do you suppose the encyclopedia tells how to conduct a gymnasium?" Betty queried promptly.

"Wasn't that a peculiar thing for Uncle

Herbert to do?" Ernest inquired disappointedly.

"Not so peculiar," Daphne replied tersely, taking up the defense of her absent uncle. "He had a good chance to get acquainted with us. I think he is hinting that there are plenty of things we can do for ourselves, and that books will teach us anything we want to learn, and that we Haleys are inclined to be ——"

"Daphne, you're stirring things up," her mother objected.

"That's all right, Mother. You leave the children to me. I'll make you proud of them yet," Daphne predicted confidently. "All they *need* is a little stirring up."

"I wish I had the money I put in the rug," was Ernest's sole comment.

CHAPTER V

THE PICNIC

ON the first day of the last week of school, Miss Rice's pupils were restless, but so were the pupils of every other teacher in Newbury. There is only one last week of school in a year.

"I may as well tell you," Miss Rice smiled, "that there will be a school picnic on Saturday at Silver Lake; the boat will leave at nine-thirty and return at five-thirty. Those who care to go will please let me know, so I can reserve tickets, which will be half the usual price."

There was more wriggling, as friends exchanged glances and smiles of approval.

"Bring your own lunches,—and try to forget the picnic during this week's examinations, which are fairly important, since they determine whether you will spend next year here or in high school." She smiled and began handing papers to the pupils.

Somehow the warm, long days of that last

week dragged by, and Saturday dawned a promising picnic-day.

“ I have a funny feeling that something will happen to-day, Norma,” Elaine hinted in her spookiest voice, as they walked to the dock.

As Elaine’s mother was dead, her Aunt Margaret kept house for the McDonalds, and Aunt Margaret had just enough Irish in her to make her love mysticism. Occasionally it affected Elaine and Gene, her smaller sister.

“ Well, I should hope so,” Norma returned emphatically. “ That’s what we’re going for—and don’t act mysterious,” she scolded, laughing at Elaine’s round eyes. “ And, oh, Elaine! I didn’t tell you that Betty called up last night, and she and Carma and Helen Hartland are going. Jimmy would have come, but he’s gone to Portland for the rest of his belongings.”

“ You brought your bathing-suit, I hope? ” Elaine queried suddenly, as they neared the dock where Betty and Carma were already waiting.

“ Yes, it’s more important than my lunch, and I didn’t forget that,” Norma returned,

waving to Betty, whom she singled out from the great throngs of young people, for all the schools of the city were represented.

If the girls had not been so impatient to reach the sandy beach, they would have enjoyed the lake-ride more, though Carma, who disliked to move on account of her bulk, said she would be content to sit on the boat all day. Carma was as sweet-natured and attractive as she was fat.

"There'll be plenty of time for a swim before lunch," Betty remarked contentedly, as she looked at the clock in the cabin.

"There won't be time for me to swim before lunch," Norma declared solemnly, and Betty laughed.

But Elaine missed the point. "Why not?" she demanded.

"Because it will take me years to learn, dearie," Norma replied.

"In some colleges they won't let you graduate until you can swim fifty strokes, Norma," Betty teased. "You'd better hurry."

At eleven o'clock the boat docked, and the girls rushed for the park, where they tried out

the various amusements, then returned to the bath-house to prepare for their swim.

“We’ll stay in a half-hour,” Betty announced, “then come out for lunch.”

She ran into the water without waiting for the rest, who stood back and shivered in anticipation of the cold water.

“Did you see that, Norma?” Elaine queried. “I don’t believe she knows that the water is cold.”

Norma laughed delightedly. “You wouldn’t expect Betty to go in with a mincing step and stop to shiver, would you?”

At the picture of Betty proceeding in any such manner, Elaine laughed.

“I wish I could swim,” Norma sighed.

“Same here, but we’ll have to paddle, as usual.”

For an hour the girls played, then the crowds began drifting away toward the park, and lunches appeared.

“I’ll beat you getting dressed,” Betty challenged, racing toward the bath-house.

“I don’t doubt it,” Elaine answered pleasantly, knowing her challenger.

In twenty minutes the girls were spreading out what looked like too much lunch, but proved to be just enough.

"It's funny how much we can eat when we're outdoors. At home I couldn't eat half so much," Norma declared as she finished a second piece of Betty's cake.

"I wonder how much those water-balls cost," Betty mused, looking toward the gay stand with its heap of huge, striped balls.

"Fifty cents," Carma informed her promptly. "I priced them, and can't afford one,—worse luck," she added.

"Neither can I," Norma decided after a moment's swift reckoning. "I've tied all my money up in cinnamon suckers."

"A banker's daughter should be more far-sighted," Betty reproved. "How about you, Elaine?"

"I had three rides on the caterpillar, and two on the roller-coaster, and I had to buy a bathing-cap, you know," Elaine apologized.

"Don't ask me," Helen Hartland begged. "I have just thirty-two cents left, and I spent my money as conscientiously as I could."

“Then we’ll have to form a company and purchase one,” Betty concluded, “just as I suspected from the first.”

Purses appeared from mysterious places, and a collection was taken.

“Whose will it be when we’re finished with it, Betty? You’re so smart at arranging things. Tell us *that*,” Carma challenged, her dark blue eyes sparkling with fun.

For a moment Betty was nonplussed. She looked about helplessly for inspiration, while the girls watched smilingly, to see how the resourceful Betty would meet the emergency.

“That’s simple,” Betty stated coolly, as she began to wrap up the remains of her lunch-box for future reference. “We’ll donate it to those fresh-air youngsters from the camp down the beach.” She nodded in the direction of a band of khaki-clad tots.

The girls applauded, and Betty sighed with relief. “You almost had me, girls.”

“What shall we do now?” Helen asked, getting up briskly from the green bench they had taken at the end of the grove. “We mustn’t waste any time.”

"We're going to rest for those races,—at least *I* am," Betty amended. "Judge Cole furnishes the prizes, and they're always worth running after. I wish I had remembered the races while I was eating so much," she added regretfully.

"Let's go and sit in the sand. I love to feel warm sand under me," Norma suggested lazily. "And we can see just about everything that's going on without moving."

"And we can spread our bathing-suits out to dry, so they will be ready when we want to go in again." Elaine unrolled her own wet suit, and the others followed her example.

At two o'clock, the time set for the games, the school crowd gathered in the grove and watched excited preparations for entering. The races for the smaller children were held first, then the fifty-yard dash for older girls.

When Helen Hartland and Betty lined up for the start, the others gave advice.

"Keep away from the crowd," Elaine admonished, "so you won't get tripped. There are so many entering."

"Make a quick turn to come back," Carma

warned, though she never had run a race in her life, owing to the fact that she was not built for running.

“Get a good start,” Norma advised. “That’s everything.”

“Children,” Betty drawled, when she felt that she had stood enough, “I ran races when you were in swaddling-clothes. I used to climb out of the cradle and dress up in Annette’s clothes, and enter races. People always took me for much older than I was.”

“I’m inclined to believe that about crawling out of the cradle to enter races,” Carma laughed. “It has the ring of truth in it.”

“On the line!” a bass voice called.

There was a shot, and twenty girls were off, many of them dropping out because of a poor start, or seeing much better runners. Betty’s friends squealed with delight when she reached the goal first, and, with a quick turn, dashed back to the starting-point an easy winner.

It was Betty’s turn to squeal when Judge Cole handed her a tennis-racket. “Just exactly what I wanted,” she exulted. “If I’d had my choice of anything in the world, I’d

have said a tennis-racket," she cried enthusiastically.

After the games were over, the girls started back to the bath-house.

"Now to get our water-ball in motion," Betty exclaimed. "Last one in the water is an Egyptian mummy!" And the girls followed her, helter-skelter, to the lockers.

In a short time the gay ball was the center of a huge ring that scattered to grab it as it bobbed tantalizingly on the surface of the water, its colors sparkling as it became wet. It was like Betty to invite every one she knew to join her circle, and she knew a great many. As the ring grew in size, the noise and confusion and laughter that attended their antics, in trying to get the ball, increased, until they were the center of attraction both to the people on shore and those in the water.

By the middle of the afternoon every one who had a bathing-suit was in the water, and the shallow edge of the lake became a dense mass of bobbing heads, from which it was difficult to distinguish any one person.

At four o'clock Elaine glanced about casu-

ally, then more carefully, until finally she was frowning anxiously. "I wonder where Norma is, Carma," she said, still craning her neck to see over all heads. "It's getting late, and we have to dress for the boat and dry our suits. I don't see her anywhere. She didn't say anything about going in to get dressed. Betty! Betty!" she called. "Did you see Norma?"

Betty looked toward the beach. "What's that crowd?" she demanded.

As rapidly as possible they waded to the shore, to see Norma stretched out limp and motionless, while the life-guard lifted her, rolled her, and worked her arms with dextrous precision.

Elaine tried to speak, but felt the world go black about her, so that she caught at Carma's arm for support. It didn't seem possible that anything could have happened to Norma without their knowing it. She heard the well-poised Betty ask in unsteady tones: "What happened? Is she all right? She isn't—she won't ——"

No one answered, for the simple reason that no one could say—yet.

"She was sittin' on the raft, and it tipped, and she went under." Andrew Cole volunteered the information. "Joe Campagna saw her, and, when she didn't come up, he went after her."

"Keep the crowd back!" the guard ordered sharply, without stopping his steady rolling and lifting, to drain the water from the girl's lungs. "You're shutting off the air."

Near Norma knelt Joe, solemn-eyed and still, apparently unconscious of the crowd around him, his wet clothes clinging to him, his hair dripping.

"Oh, I shouldn't have left her!" Elaine cried in remorse. "I should have *stayed* with her."

"She'll be all right, Elaine," Betty assured, her own unsteady voice betraying her doubt of what she said. "You go and get your clothes on; you're shivering."

"She moved her eyelids!" Joe exclaimed.

"No," the crowd objected. "I didn't see her."

The men who patrolled the beach forced the crowd back.



“KEEP THE CROWD BACK!” THE GUARD ORDERED SHARPLY.
Page 84.

"I think she's beginning to breathe," the guard remarked without missing the steady motions.

This time the girl stirred so that every one could see her, and Elaine laughed and cried hysterically until Betty led her away.

"If Joseph hadn't seen her," Elaine sobbed, and ended on a laughing note it was terrible to hear.

"But he did, Elaine," Betty soothed. "Hurry now," she commanded, "so we can help dress Norma. The boat will be leaving in three-quarters of an hour."

Under the necessity for action, Elaine braced up and hurried into her clothes, so that when Norma was carried in, she was ready, with somewhat shaky fingers, to help dress her friend.

On the boat Betty commandeered the most comfortable chair for Norma, who lay back supinely, rather white, but able to talk.

"Joseph's clothes must be wet," she worried in a weak voice. "He didn't even have a bathing-suit."

"The guard had Joe's clothes dried in the

electric drier in the bath-house," Carma replied. "He's all right."

As for Joseph, he kept away from the little group around Norma, though occasionally they saw him look at her from around the corner of the cabin, as if to assure himself that she really was there and alive.

The ride home was a quiet one, for one of their number had been too perilously near death for the girls to forget it soon.

"Remember I told you this morning something was going to happen, Norma?" Elaine inquired solemnly.

For answer Norma, with a tired smile, returned a question: "Well, it didn't, did it?"

"I'm going to teach you girls to swim this summer," Betty announced with decision. "Carma and I are the only ones who have too much sense to drown, except on extreme provocation, of course."

"Will that be part of your gymnasium work this summer, Betty?" Elaine queried teasingly.

"You don't think I mean that, do you? Well, it starts this next week, and I'm going to make money at it," Betty affirmed.

As they neared the dock, another problem faced Betty. "I think you'll have to stay on the boat while I go and telephone your father, Norma."

"Mother said they probably would meet us," Norma replied. "They usually drive in the evening, anyway."

When the boat stopped, one of the officers came and carried the girl ashore, though she protested that she "thought" she could walk. A little distance from the dock the St. Clairs' car was waiting, and Jimmy stood near the picket-fence, watching the boat unload. He hurried forward at sight of Norma being carried, an anxious, questioning look on his usually smiling face.

"I'm water-logged, Jimmy," Norma explained in a weak voice.

"She tried to drown, but Joseph Campagna objected rather effectively," Carma added.

Without replying, Jimmy took her from the uniformed officer and carried her to the waiting car, where Norma tried rather weakly to assure her parents that she was quite all right.

"But what happened?" her mother de-

manded, as no one volunteered to tell her that she had nearly lost her daughter.

Mr. St. Clair appeared completely absorbed in the problem of stowing her in a comfortable position in the car, while Betty related what had happened, as briefly as possible, trying not to alarm her friend's parents unnecessarily.

"She was unconscious only ten minutes," Betty finished, feeling, after she had spoken, that it was not the thing to say.

"Only! Well, that was ten minutes too long!" Mrs. St. Clair cried tremulously.

"We'll have to do something for Joseph," Norma's father remarked gruffly.

"You be careful, Father," Norma objected. "Joseph's sensitive; he wouldn't want you to *give* him anything."

"Am I so tactless that I need to be warned?" he returned with an attempt at banter.

"So it was little Michael Angelo!" Mrs. St. Clair murmured.

In the front seat, beside Mr. St. Clair, Jimmy looked straight ahead and spoke not a word all the way home.

CHAPTER VI

BETTY BEGINS

By Monday morning Norma was quite herself, and ready to enjoy the summer of freedom.

At breakfast Mr. St. Clair remarked to Jimmy, "I don't know whether it would interest you, Jimmy, but the treasurer of the Gorham Steel was in the bank Saturday noon, and I asked him if he was looking for a talented young man. He said they wanted an office-boy. It may be beneath your dignity; I'm merely mentioning it." Norma's father smiled as he spoke, his keen blue eyes on the boy.

"It isn't beneath my dignity, if you think I could learn anything there," Jimmy responded seriously.

"I think a wide-awake office-boy can learn more about a business in a week than most of the men higher up can in a year. The office-boy comes in contact with everybody in the organization. He sees traits that men are care-

ful to hide from their associates. He sees men waste time, and bluff about being busy. He knows why they succeed and wherein they fail,—if he has his eyes open,” Norma’s father summed up impressively.

“It sounds enticing,” Jimmy agreed, as he finished his favorite breakfast dish of cereal and banana with cream. “I guess I’ll run over to the Gorham Steel; I know where to go,” he added, anticipating Mr. St. Clair’s next question.

At this point Norma sighed deeply. “I wish I were a boy, so I could be doing something.” The telephone interrupted her.

“Yes. Oh, is that you, Betty? Come and see your gym? Of course. I’ll be over soon. I’ll stop for Elaine; I know she will want to see it.” Norma hung up, and turned to her mother.

“I made my bed, Mother, and dusted my room. I suppose Katy can do the rest?”

Her mother nodded. “Good luck, then, Jimmy. So long.”

When Elaine and Norma arrived at the Haleys’ the clouds of dust emanating from the

garage told them what was happening, and who was making it happen.

“ I’m in business, girls,—for myself,” she announced briskly. “ This isn’t a barn any longer—it’s a gymnasium. Notice the difference. The youngsters will come in here, and it must be clean.”

“ This is no place for idlers, Norma,” Elaine remarked, as she reached for an old broom and found Norma a push-broom.

“ Any customers—I mean pupils—yet? ” Norma wanted to know.

“ Rather,” Betty replied promptly. “ Adele Baxter is coming every day—and Jimmy McEwen. He runs away, and his mother has two younger; she’s nearly distracted.

“ There, that’s better! ” she approved, as she dumped sweepings into a tall basket. “ Now to get the basketball baskets set up on the clothes-posts.” As she spoke she picked up a screw-driver, then dragged a step-ladder into position, and attacked the screws which held one of the baskets.

“ What else are you planning for amusement, Betty? ” Elaine inquired.

“ I’m putting another swing on the big elm, and George promised to get a load of sand for a sand-pile near the back fence. The boys can pitch quoits; we have plenty of horse-shoes.”

“ Do you think you can get enough to make it pay—for giving up your time, I mean? ” Elaine asked curiously. “ You won’t have a minute to yourself.”

Betty laughed easily. “ When everything is ready, I’m going to invite all the youngsters up to twelve years old. They can come for two days free. After that, the youngsters on the wrong side of the fence will be crying,” she predicted; “ there’ll be so much fun on this side. I think the idea will take root, as Father says,” she added hopefully. “ It will appeal to the kiddies because there will always be something going on, and it will appeal to their parents because the youngsters will be safe and their play supervised.”

As the visitors departed for lunch, Betty called, “ Remember, to-morrow is the big opening day! ”

“ I wonder if she can make a success of it,”

Elaine mused, on their way home. "Things like that usually fall through."

"Betty is so enthusiastic that any one she talks to will be, too, and you know how the youngsters adore her," Norma observed.

By the time Betty's interested friends arrived on Tuesday morning, the "gym" was harboring every eligible youngster in the neighborhood.

"Oh, Betty, I'd never know the place!" Norma cried, as she entered the gymnasium proper, and saw the whitewashed walls and grey painted floor.

Betty looked up from a long table improvised from long boards and two saw-horses, and covered with white oilcloth. Around the table were five little girls, intent on the doll-dresses Betty was cutting for them.

"Isn't it cheerful? The boys helped me last night. Mother gave me this oilcloth, and bought new for the kitchen-table," she volunteered, indicating the smooth surface of the "table" on which she was working. "Just go on out to the back yard and see the fun," she directed.

The two looked out on a noisy, babbling crowd of youngsters, the older boys standing up on the swings, the tiniest tots busy at a small sand-pile; the in-betweens pitching quoits as earnestly as if they had been throwing ropes to drowning friends.

Bert McDonald and Horace Lowney were busy with an auger, boring a hole in a plank.

"Why, I didn't know you were here, Bert! Aren't you a little old?" Elaine teased.

"How about you and Norma?" Bert retorted, his Irish blue eyes flashing.

"We're visiting," Elaine returned.

"George came over last night to borrow the auger, and I could not find it," Bert explained, "so I told him I'd bring it over to-day. Betty asked me to show her how to run it, and then walked off and left me. As an executive, Betty has a touch of genius," Bert pronounced.

"When we finish this, I think she's going to *let* us put up the trapeze," Horace grinned good-naturedly.

"Having met the energetic physical director, I am prepared to predict complete success for the undertaking," Bert asserted.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMER PLANS

THE week after school closed, Commencement exercises were held in the high school. After attending her own promotion exercises, which were very simple, Norma felt curious to see how one went about it to graduate from high school. The girl was grateful for the invitation to Daphne's class-exercises, as she had never even been in the high school she was to attend next year.

On Commencement night, Daphne, in a simple white gown, faced the crowded auditorium and announced the title of her essay, "Our City," for hers was one of the few chosen to be read. Norma, sitting beside Betty, squeezed her hand, and Betty smiled confidently; if Daphne wrote it and read it, it would be good, her sister knew.

In a well-planned account, Daphne called attention to the city's advantages, its natural water-power, its nearness to rich agricultural

country, its position in the country with respect to large cities, the unusual number of railroads passing through it, its steady growth, and the reasons for expecting it to continue to grow. She mentioned its comparative nearness to a state university as a reason why people should continue to live in Newbury.

Betty's eyes sparkled at the applause, for the people received enthusiastically an appreciation of their own home town, bringing out many good points to which they had never given a thought.

By skillfully manœuvering, Betty and Norma managed to edge their way through the crowd and meet Daphne, as she reached the room beside the stage. "It was just fine, Daphne!" Betty greeted.

"They applauded more for you than for any one else," Norma added, offering her hand rather shyly in congratulation to this girl, who seemed so very grown-up, now that she had graduated from high school.

Daphne smiled dreamily, and George approached in time to hear Norma's words.

"It was just the business men, Sister," he

teased. "They always like to hear their own town lauded. Sometimes I think you're more practical than artistic."

"I try to be both," Daphne retorted, unruffled by her brother's left-handed compliment.

"Pardon me," a voice said. It was Miss Jameson—in a green dress!

"Miss Haley, this is Mr. Graham, of Downs, Cotter, and Field. Mr. Graham wants to talk business with you." Miss Jameson nodded pleasantly and left.

Daphne acknowledged the introduction, and looked questioningly at Mr. Graham. He had keen black eyes, and an aquiline nose.

"It may be a poor time to talk business," he apologized, "but the fact is, we're looking for an illustrator right away, and Miss Jameson recommended you, and thought you might like the work. It would be illustrating for our advertisements, and any folders and leaflets we put out," he explained. "Would it appeal to you, or have you other plans?"

Downs, Cotter, and Field happened to be the biggest department-store in Newbury.

However, Betty denied later that her mouth dropped open while she waited for Daphne to reply. It was George who accused her of the undignified facial expression.

"I have no definite plans, except to do something that will give me experience," Daphne returned eagerly. She had no idea how attractive she was, with her cameo-like face lit with enthusiasm.

"Just come in Monday morning, then, if you're interested," Mr. Graham continued. "I won't keep you any longer now, because I know your friends want to talk to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Graham," Daphne said, as she took his card, and watched him depart.

"Just what you've been hinting for. That's why you wrote that essay. Didn't I predict it? Didn't I?" George demanded triumphantly.

"George, your tie is crooked," Betty informed him witheringly. "You've no idea how ridiculous you look."

Apparently Daphne did not hear. "It's just what I wanted, though I hardly knew it. I'll learn so much about materials, and there will be so many nice things to draw."

“And you can teach them so much in return,” George soothed, while he assured himself that his tie really was not far out of place. “They’ll be surprised how little they really know, when you begin to point out to them what art actually is.”

“Oh, I hope they take you, Daphne!” Betty breathed, looking adoringly at her sister.

By this time people were crowding around with congratulations, which Daphne tried hard to listen to, and to answer properly. She had to remember that they were not congratulating her for securing the best position in the world, as it seemed at the moment, but for graduating with honor, which event seemed a long way back to the dazed girl.

“I’ll be grateful for what I’ve learned from the books Uncle Herbert gave me,” Daphne sighed happily. “There’s Mother!” she added, and started toward the door, to the quiet little woman in the black-satin dress, which Annette had brought up to date. “Good news, Mother,” she whispered excitedly, and told briefly what had happened.

When Norma reached home, her parents

were sitting on the deep veranda, which was hidden from the street by vines and trees. In the dim light of an overhead lamp they awaited her. The gay orange-and-black veranda furniture Norma had chosen herself. Jimmy, stretched out lazily in the hammock-couch, sat up when Norma appeared.

"You didn't come home alone?" he began politely. "I could have ——"

"No, George Haley brought me home," Norma informed him.

"Did you find out how to graduate from high school?" he inquired.

"Yes," Norma responded to his mood; "all I have to do is to wear a pretty white dress and think about my career, and every one will smile at me because I'm graduating," she summed up. "I can hardly wait," she added enthusiastically, "until I really begin to do something. Just think! Daphne may get the very kind of position she wants, next Monday." The girl went into detail concerning Daphne's good fortune. "I'm going to do something, too; I don't know what, but I'm not going to sit around and do nothing."

“Child, it won’t be necessary for you to work,” Mrs. St. Clair remonstrated. “I’ve always hoped you would be content to stay at home after finishing college.”

“If she’s prepared to do something, it won’t matter whether it’s necessary or not,” Mr. St. Clair pointed out. “She’ll be ready in either case. Better men than I am have lost their money,” he stated, with an encouraging smile at Norma, who laughed at her mother’s discomfiture. “We’ll try to fix it so you can work, Daughter,” he promised heartily.

“Daphne says all the girls in her class are going to be something. Merle Stratton is going to start a tea-room; her Grandmother Stratton fainted when they told her, and when she ‘came to,’ she said in her days Strattons did not keep tea-rooms. Merle told Daphne she wanted to say that in *her* day Strattons didn’t faint and crochet lace for petticoats, but it would have sounded saucy.”

Jimmy and Mr. St. Clair laughed heartily, but Mrs. St. Clair only smiled, and said, “I don’t think Grandma Stratton really fainted.”

“*I* think she did,” Jimmy insisted. “It

would spoil the whole story if she didn't," he chuckled. "Women are funny, but they have a lot more sense than they used to have. I'd rather see them play basketball and run tea-rooms than faint and crochet!"

"You might teach, Norma," Mrs. St. Clair suggested anxiously.

"No, Mother. It isn't teaching or a tea-room. I don't know what it is I want to do, but I'll recognize it when some one mentions it," Norma averred seriously.

"I know how Norma feels," Jimmy stated sagely. "There's something about work that no one would want to miss,—no live person, that is. It's fun being among people who are doing things. They seem more alive than the sticks who sit around, waiting for the next meal—that some one else has earned."

As Jimmy talked, Norma watched him admiringly. He was so clean-cut and capable-looking, he surely would amount to something.

"Are you learning things, Jimmy? The kind Father said you would, about the men in the company?"

“Yes. I heard to-day that the president’s nephew is going on the road, selling. He’s been sales-manager for six months. Taylor says that putting him on the road is like telling him to make good or get out entirely. The sales fell off when he ran things; on the road he will get nothing but a commission.”

“There is not nearly so much truth in this talk about ‘pull’ as people suppose,” Mr. St. Clair agreed.

On Monday afternoon Norma walked slowly, for it was a warm day, over to see what progress Betty was making with the new gymnasium. As she approached she saw Betty sitting on a low stool, reading, six youngsters sitting cross-legged on the grass, listening, while Adele Baxter had fallen asleep on her lap. As quietly as she could, Norma stole up, so that she might not interrupt, but Betty laid down the book and smiled a welcome.

“You want to hear about Alaska, Norma? I chose reading—and a cool subject—for a hot day. Sit down and see if it doesn’t cool you off just to hear about it,” she invited.

Laughingly Norma accepted the invitation.

"No one but you would have thought of it, Betty. Go right on," she commanded, seeing that the children were impatient and squirming at the interruption.

Having finished the story of Alaska, Betty laid Adele in a shady spot, with a small sweater for a pillow, set the children to rolling a ball while they still sat in the ring they had formed about her, then turned to Norma.

"Now, Norma, if you'll come inside with me, I'll make some lemonade for the kiddies. I made cookies this morning—under Mother's directions." Betty led the way.

"You know very well I'm dying to hear about Daphne, Betty! Did she ——?"

"She did," Betty returned succinctly. "She's up-stairs, making a dark-blue taffeta dress look tailored and business-like, and at the same time cool. Even Mother was excited when she heard how much they pay. Daphne doesn't hear anything that's said to her. She's hardly spoken to me but,"—Betty lifted her head,—"I'm not doing so badly myself."

Betty went to the ice-box. "Let's see, lemonade for six children and three young

ladies; I suppose Daphne will come down to earth long enough to drink it."

Norma smiled. She knew that Betty was just as pleased as Daphne over the latter's good fortune.

"Oh, by the way, Norma! That's fine about Joseph, isn't it?" Betty asked casually, as she rolled lemons.

"What about him?" Norma inquired rather blankly, as she cut and squeezed the lemons Betty handed her.

"He's taking lessons from Grace Kane every day, for the summer. She charges a lot, too. Didn't you know it?" Betty looked up in surprise, as she measured sugar from a dark-brown can, the letters of which had been obliterated long since.

"No. I thought he would be working," Norma replied.

"He is,—in the fruit store,—but his uncle lets him off for the lessons."

Betty filled a large pitcher, which tinkled pleasantly with the ice in it, handed two stacks of glasses to Norma, and the girls returned to the yard, where they were storked.

That evening, at the dinner-table, Norma remembered her news-item, while she was telling that Daphne had been successful in securing the position as illustrator.

“Oh, Father! Joseph is taking lessons from Grace Kane. I wonder where he gets the money; she charges a lot for her time.” Norma’s attention was focused on early peas and carrots, of which she was very fond, so that she missed the amused look of the other three.

“I hope no tactless person offered it to him,” Jimmy commented, “to hurt his feelings.”

At some familiar connection between the idea of tact and Joseph, Norma grew suspicious. She might have said it herself. “Father, did you ——?” she began.

“Did I do anything tactless? No. I sent the money to Miss Kane and told her to offer Joe lessons ‘because of his pronounced talent.’ I hope I wasn’t tactless?” her father queried humbly.

“Oh, I’m so glad!” Norma returned, a trifle indirectly. “It’s the best thing you could have done. He would have to go to school one more year; he’s fifteen now. Then he’d drop his

drawing and painting and never amount to anything."

For the next few minutes Norma divided her thoughts between Joseph and the new peas and carrots.

"You might tell your friends, Norma, that the Bankers' Association is offering prizes for the best advertisement to be used by them on the subject of investment. It need not be entirely original, though the general idea should be, and it must not be more than one hundred words. It may be prose, rhyme, or song,—so long as it makes good advertising copy."

Norma did not feel any deep interest in her father's announcement. It sounded too difficult. "Maybe Jimmy can win a prize; he knows something about business," she evaded.

When the three others laughed, Norma wondered why.

"Business isn't learned in a week or so, Norma," Jimmy admitted, still smiling.

He looked so nice when he smiled that Norma forgave him for laughing at her.

That evening, when Betty and Elaine walked with her to the park, and talked about

high school and Betty's gymnasium and Daphne's career and other important matters, Norma told Betty about the contest. "There are so many in your family, Betty, surely one of you should win the prize."

"I'll demand part of it for telling them, if one of them should," Betty returned.

"I don't know when the contest closes," Norma continued. "I may not be here."

"Where do you go this summer, Norm'?" Elaine wanted to know. "Up north again on the lake?"

"Up north again on the lake," Norma repeated, "about the first of August."

"I wish you'd get over the habit—a whole month every year. It just spoils my vacation," Elaine complained, putting her arm around Norma.

But Betty offered consolation of a sort. "Cheer up, Elaine! Some one must stay here to assist with my gymnasium. Mother has a lot to do, you know, with seven in the house; she can't possibly manage it all. Daphne's going to pay me the difference, if I get some one to help watch the youngsters part of the time.

I won't give it up entirely, but I could use a partner—one about like you, Elaine," Betty wheedled.

Elaine stuck her hands in imaginary pockets, and assumed what she considered the voice of a business man. "I have no objection to going into a small business," she agreed.

"Put it there, partner," Betty directed, holding out her hand. "This is the orthodox way of sealing a bargain."

"You're tantalizing me," Norma pouted. "You're spoiling not only my favorite lake, but all vacation-spots," she exaggerated. "Now if you'd promise to write frequently —" she hinted.

They promised.

CHAPTER VIII

NORMA MIGRATES

EARLY in August Mr. St. Clair drove his wife and daughter to the lake in Canada where, for several years, they had spent a part of each summer. They arrived near dusk, when the sun was dropping at the far end of the lake, and the trees were turning a cloudy blue.

After the mysterious way of hotels that are full of guests, the white frame building appeared to be deserted, its occupants being everywhere but in evidence.

Norma loved the smell of the evergreen trees and the cool quiet of the place. She hoped there were girls her own age this year, either staying at the hotel or in the summer cottages near by. But by dinner-time, when she watched the guests troop into the great dining-hall, her hopes fell. There were small boys and old ladies; a clergyman and his wife, who kept to themselves, because, Norma decided, they were so tired of talking to endless people; a

semi-invalid man and his wife. The latter had no children, and both talked incessantly about their dog from morning until night. Norma liked the curly brown dog until she had listened, through parts of several days, to its likes and dislikes, age, and cute habits when it was younger.

There were three young men in gay-colored sweaters and white flannel trousers, who played ukuleles and saxophones and ignored Norma completely. She hadn't the courage to offer to play the piano for them, when she heard them complaining that there seemed to be no one who could or would.

There was a sprightly little woman who had gone to eighteen different places for relief from hay fever, and talked hay fever until Norma wished she had happened to sit at some other table, and hoped she wasn't unsympathetic.

"Father," Norma spoke suddenly, after the other guests at the table had hurried away for a launch-ride before dark, "if I ever talk on one subject until I bore people, just yawn or sigh heavily or cover your ears or give me some other signal."

Her father nodded absently, his mind being on something else.

"I'm going to walk down to the Indian village," Norma announced, and started down the trail to the little huts where the Indians sold their wares—sweet-grass baskets, lovely fur-trimmed moccasins, and bows and arrows.

Near the end of the row of huts was a girl whose dress and bearing set her apart from the untidy women of her tribe. She might have been eighteen. Her expression marked her as different; there was purpose in her serene face. Norma smiled shyly as she stepped up to the "Blue Bell" hut, for such was the name over the door. She wished she weren't so afraid of strangers and did not have to remind herself that they wouldn't bite. The girl responded with a flash of white teeth, and waited, apparently, for Norma to speak.

"This is a lovely place to have your store," Norma began. She knew that an Indian has a certain poise and sense of good manners, and resents the tactless, blunt questions curious people so often ask, but yet responds quickly to friendly advances.

"Yes," the girl agreed, "I am glad we chose this place for our shop this summer."

"Blue Bell is a pretty name for it," Norma commented, looking up at the sign in blue letters on the rough, unpainted boards of the shack.

"It is my own name," the Indian girl explained.

"Mine is Norma St. Clair," Norma returned, seeing the belated opportunity to introduce herself properly.

"That is pretty, too," Blue Bell declared, and added, after a slight pause, "Are you a Canadian?"

"No, I live just across the line at Newbury."

As they talked, she noticed Blue Bell's well-kept hands, her neat jersey dress, and her careful speech. Norma was sure she would find the girl's history interesting, if she could draw her out.

"I live here in summer and in Montreal in winter, when I attend school. I am going to be a teacher in another year," she stated simply, yet Norma could see she was proud.

"I shall teach my own people," she added, looking off dreamily, as if visualizing her future.

"That is fine," Norma answered warmly, appreciating the fact that, because of some instantly recognized bond between them, the Indian girl was opening her heart to an unusual degree. The visitor had felt, when her eyes first rested on Blue Bell, that they would be friends; something drew her, and evidently the Indian girl had felt it, too.

"I don't know what sort of work I shall do," the younger girl admitted regretfully.

"You are young," Blue Bell replied. "When I was your age, I had not learned to read; then a teacher, a guest at the hotel, taught me, and I have studied much alone and have attended school. Now I want to teach my people all I can learn."

Some dirty, cheerful children of the tribe were wandering by, and stopped to smile at Blue Bell, who evidently was their friend, and to look curiously at Norma.

"See, they want me to tell them a story. I make them wash their hands and faces, and

fasten up their stockings and tie their shoelaces, before I talk to them," she informed Norma. "It is the way I teach them to care for their appearance. It is the little people I hope to help. I want them to be clean and intelligent and useful. I want to be proud of the people of my tribe," she pronounced wistfully, looking off a little sadly, as if she felt keenly their indifference to self-improvement. "I tell them of the wonderful things American girls are doing; then I tell them that what American girls do, Indian girls can do, also."

"Of course they can," Norma agreed, enchanted by this maiden of another race, who dreamed of doing things against great obstacles. She was afraid to move, for fear the spell would break, or Blue Bell might become reticent. But Blue Bell was gazing off over the lake again, seeing visions, Norma was sure.

"I suppose you swim," Norma ventured.

Blue Bell nodded. "And play basketball and tennis."

"If you're going in swimming in the morning," Norma pursued, wondering just how far she dared go with this promising friendship,

"I'll go in the water with you, but I can't swim."

"About ten o'clock I go in, and I will help you learn to swim, if you will let me," Blue Bell offered in her precise accent.

Because an Indian girl would try to teach her to swim, Norma's heart danced. Blue Bell would not succeed, she was sure, for Norma was convinced she never could learn; but it meant that Blue Bell wanted to be her friend.

Seeing several customers approach the shop, Norma slipped away, and hurried to tell her mother of Blue Bell, who was infinitely more wonderful than Hiawatha.

"Isn't she clever, Mother? Only four years of school, and next year she will teach. I wish we could take her home and keep her. I want to know her always,—and what she is doing," Norma cried excitedly.

Her mother laughed. "Norma, I'm sure no one ever lived who was more curious than you are about what people are, or are going to be or do next. You're insatiable."

"But isn't every one?" Norma queried, her level dark brows raised in astonishment.

“Not to the extent you are, child. I never saw your equal.”

As Mrs. St. Clair was lost again in her magazine, Norma's thoughts followed the drift her mother had suggested. Blue Bell's future seemed the most important thing in the world, as was Jimmy's a few weeks ago, and, more recently, Joseph's, and Daphne's and Betty's, —in fact, all the interesting Haleys. Well, it *was* absorbing. People were just like true stories; one couldn't help wondering what would happen next, and what would become of them. Only Norma had supposed every one felt the same rapt interest. She dreamed on now, until it was dark, partly conscious that she watched the deepening reflection of the trees in the water on the far shore.

Darkness hid the world until another day, which would be a new chapter. Somewhere near the tamarack tree in front of the hotel a whippoorwill repeated the only words it knew, and that sound and her thoughts and the smell of pines were linked in an impression that became a lasting memory.

CHAPTER IX

“MAN IS SUPERIOR TO THE ELEMENTS”

IN spite of delicious corn muffins and marmalade and a tempting fluffy omelet for breakfast, Norma was impatient to be outdoors, partly because she wanted to visit old haunts, chiefly to see the new-found Blue Bell.

“What are you going to do this morning, Daughter?” Mr. St. Clair asked.

“Blue Bell is going to *try* to teach me to swim; she doesn’t know what she’s undertaking, and I didn’t tell her,” Norma confided, “but she’ll soon find out.”

“I can let you have an extra inner tube I brought. I’ll pump it up after breakfast,” her father promised. “It ought to be helpful in learning to swim; it will hold your weight.” He appeared to be intent on his breakfast for a few moments. Norma was accustomed to the abstraction which is peculiar to men who spend too much time on figures. He emerged from it with an interesting proposition.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Norma. Let’s get these swimming-lessons over with. I’ll give you five dollars if you learn to swim before we go home; ten if you learn in three weeks; fifteen if you learn in two weeks; and, if you can swim ten strokes alone at the end of *this* week, I’ll make it twenty-five dollars.”

“O-o-o-h, I’ll get it over with and take the twenty-five!” she exclaimed optimistically in one breath.

“I hope so. I would rather give you the twenty-five dollars than the five, and you will have a lot more fun out of your vacation when you have lost your fear of the water,” her father reminded.

On the steps of the veranda Norma hesitated. The three young men who were fond of music and violent sweaters were playing tennis on the court near the hotel. Norma had met them by this time, but had forgotten to connect the proper name with the proper sweater, and so could not distinguish them. While they were out, it occurred to her that it was not a bad time to try some of the music she had seen on the piano.

Having assured herself that the big, gayly-decorated room at the east end of the hotel, seldom used except on cool or rainy days, was unoccupied, Norma began to play a popular piece. She had not finished when the blond young man who played the ukulele hurried in.

"I beg your pardon," he began breathlessly. "The fellows sent me in to see if you would play for us when we practise. Do you mind?"

"I'd like to," Norma admitted, flattered beyond words, and feeling very grown-up. She resolved to mention it casually in her next letter to Betty—possibly in a postscript.

"Now?" he pursued. "Have you something else you want to do?"

After glancing at the mission clock on the huge stone fireplace, Norma replied, "No—not until ten o'clock." She found it highly gratifying to be implored to play, by young men much older than herself.

The red sweater disappeared, and reappeared a moment later with two others just as gaudy, their owners carrying a ukulele, a violin, and a saxophone. In a few minutes the quiet old hotel was filled with gay music.

When Norma had played the last piece for them, Otto Hoyer thanked her heartily. “We appreciate that, Miss St. Clair.”

“Lots of times there’s nothing to do unless we can stir up some music,” added Harry Quinn, who played the saxophone.

“He doesn’t really mean that his saxophone is music; he knows better, of course, but we humor him,” Duane Harmon explained, looking up from the violin he was carefully putting in the case.

“You’ll play for us after dinner?” Otto Hoyer inquired eagerly as the girl started to leave.

“If you call it playing,” Norma responded, with a meaning look at the saxophone player whose effort had been denounced.

Hurrying to her own room, Norma changed her dress for a gay blue-and-yellow bathing-suit, adjusted a yellow cap over her dark curls, and slipped on her blue bathing-shoes.

On the veranda she found her parents waiting, her father holding up a new tube. “Ready for action, Norma?” he inquired as he handed it to her.

“Yes. Thanks, Dad; I won’t let it get away,” she assured him, and, spying Blue Bell in a black suit, diving off the spring-board, she hurried down the steps, but not before she heard her mother say in a low voice: “Now, you watch her; don’t let her know it, but stay near.”

She smiled. Well, they wouldn’t need to worry much longer—twenty-five dollars in one week.

Blue Bell greeted her with a quiet smile, yet Norma knew she was glad to see her. An Indian never leaves any doubt as to his desire to be a friend,—or to be let alone,—however little he may say.

“I brought a tube,” Norma explained. “It helps, I guess, though I never tried one,” she added doubtfully.

“Let me show you what it will do.” Blue Bell held out a hand for the tube, and threw herself on it into the water, her hands and legs stretched out. “See?” she inquired, rising. “I weigh thirty pounds more than you do,” she stated, looking the younger girl over with an appraising eye, “and it holds me.”

Convinced that the tube was reliable, Norma stretched herself out. “It’s fun,” she agreed. “I’m not afraid this way, but I *must* learn to swim alone *this* week.” She related her father’s offer.

“Then we must waste no time,” Blue Bell declared. “Watch my stroke; do as I do,” she commanded.

After Norma had watched the older girl’s easy motions, she tried awkwardly, with the tube under her arms, to imitate Blue Bell’s strong, even stroke. When she found herself making a little progress, she was delighted.

In an hour she had learned to move with Blue Bell’s counting, which had been necessary because she tried a quick splashing instead of a slow, strong stroke. For a while she rested on the floating dock, while Blue Bell swam and dove from the spring-board.

For three days the lessons continued. On the third day Norma picked up the tube which she had thrown down on the dock, and started toward the hotel. “Why, this tube must leak!” she exclaimed. “There’s no air in it, to speak of.”

Blue Bell looked at it, then at Norma. "Have your father pump it up again," she suggested very sensibly.

"Funny!" her father commented as he took the tube. "Must be a slow leak, or maybe the valve. I'll pump it up and leave it until morning; we'll see how it looks then."

But in the morning the tube was as plump and firm as could be. Norma used it, and again discovered, when she was through swimming, that it was almost flat.

"You must be putting your finger on the valve, Norma," her father decided, looking at the offending tube with a puzzled frown.

But the third time the tire went flat, Norma's curiosity became suspicion. She looked at Blue Bell, who might have been a sphinx, so far as her expression told anything.

"I should like to know why this tube goes down in an hour's swimming and yet holds air all night."

Blue Bell's even white teeth showed as she smiled. "In Montreal there was a young man trying to learn to swim, but he was extremely nervous about water. The instructor had first

to teach him confidence, by showing him how little motion was required to keep one above the water. ‘Remember,’ he said, ‘that man is superior to the elements.’ You, Norma, have been swimming for three days with no air in the tube. Now you know you are superior to the element called water. Are you not glad?” she inquired politely.

While Norma tried to grasp this fact, Blue Bell instructed: “Now swim with the empty tube on the dock instead of under you. You will have a better opinion of yourself.”

Cautiously Norma threw herself forward, swam ten strokes, then jumped up triumphantly. “This is the sixth day. I win! I’ll go and call Father,” she announced, and, throwing her bathrobe about her, ran to the hotel.

After demonstrating her newly acquired ability, Norma heard Blue Bell say to her father, “I hope it has not tired you—pumping up the tube?”

“Not at all. I’m grateful to you for your ingenuity,” Mr. St. Clair replied heartily.

Over the dusty road Norma padded in her

cork-soled shoes. An auto passed and raised blinding clouds of dust in its wake, for there had been no rain for seven weeks.

That night, as the girl stood in Blue Bell's hut, watching the big red moon rise between the lane of trees at the top of the hill, another brighter light caught their eyes. Across the lake, the Hotel Ravenscrest was in flames.

"In a few moments there will be no hotel left," Blue Bell predicted solemnly.

As she spoke, the owner of a launch called to the men on the veranda to come, started his motor, and, as soon as the men had piled in, swung around and across the lake.

"Isn't there a fire-boat or something?" Norma queried.

Blue Bell shook her head. "They talk of it, but a fire-boat costs money and can't be everywhere at once. It can only work near the shore, and often could not get to a fire in time. Then, too, it is only needed two or three months of the year."

"But something should be done," Norma insisted, "with all these terrible forest-fires around."

“Yes, it is very simple,” Blue Bell replied, and Norma thought for a moment she was joking. “People—every one—should be extremely careful with fire,—matches, lamps, cigarettes. Carelessness with fire,—that is the tragedy of the North.”

CHAPTER X

THE HALEYS "AT HOME"

"I'M going to stay with Jimmy Rogers tonight, Mother," George Haley announced at dinner one night. "He's alone, you know. We're going to the movies, and he asked me to sleep there."

"I've never been in their home, and we've known them so many years," Daphne remarked, picking daintily with her fork at a salad.

"It's nice inside," Betty volunteered. "Everything is in order. It's restful-looking. You'd approve, Daph. In the dining-room is a big old walnut sideboard, low and heavy. It has pewter pieces on it that Norma says belonged to her great-grandmother. The table is old, too, drop-leaf and square. Mrs. St. Clair won't have the old things refinished, so I suppose it isn't the thing to do. There are nearly always flowers on the table, and you can look out of four windows over the lawn."

At this Daphne frowned at the disreputable yard which could be seen from their windows.

"Most of their furniture is old, and everything looks elegant," Betty concluded.

"That's the way people get things,—buy only good furniture and keep it for generations. Mrs. Carpenter has had three davenportes since we lived here, imitation leather, cheap tapestry, and cotton velour,—all the horrors that came along."

Fearing that Daphne might be "stirring things up," Mrs. Haley hastened to say, "In a few years we can buy a place, and you may do the interior decorating, Daphne."

"Why a few years, Mother? We're all working, even Betty," Daphne pointed out.

"We never can find a place with four or five bedrooms," Mrs. Haley objected. "Then there's the money."

"Yes—there's the money," Mr. Haley echoed sadly. "I have just about nine hundred dollars in the bank. They always want more than that on a fair-sized house. McKenzie wants fifteen hundred down on this place."

"And no one will buy it because we've

banged it up for fifteen years. The last woman who looked through it called us sh-sh-sh-shiftless," Daphne ended on a high note, and there were tears in her eyes.

"You heard her say 'shiftless,'" Annette corrected, "but she didn't say *we* were. She meant some one else—probably."

"Probably *not*," Daphne returned, wiping her eyes. "Why should she mean some one in Alaska when she was going through our house?"

Annette was silenced.

"I've always hoped we could have a place of our own," Mr. Haley began apologetically.

"Oh, I know you and Mother couldn't help it, Father," Daphne assured him quickly, for the familiar hopeless look came to her father's face. "Five of us in school most of the time, —but now it's different. We're all working, and if we have any gumption ——" She looked off as a new train of thought started. "Most families would be farther ahead if they'd coöperate. Why, we could buy *this* house, if we'd pull together."

"This ramshackle ——" George protested.

"What's so ramshackle about it?" Daphne demanded. "It's substantial—and a bargain because it's so battered-looking no one wants it. It's in a good central location, where property is bound to go up, and the places all around cost considerably more. What this house needs is paint and paper and enamel. It doesn't need to be rebuilt. We could make up the fifteen hundred necessary to buy it."

"George and I are saving for college," Ernest remarked feebly.

"We can double our money if we improve this place and sell it at a profit. You aren't *giving* the money—you're investing it. If you'll compare the price of this place with that of any house around, you'll see what can be made, if we bring this up to the neighborhood standard."

Betty, sitting on her father's left, as she had done ever since she was tiny and he had fixed her potatoes and cut her meat, was all eyes. "I'll put in the twenty-five dollars I've saved," she offered heroically.

Every one laughed, as they were inclined to do at Betty because she was the youngest,

and they always had laughed at her or with her.

“ You fix up your room with yours, Betty,” Daphne instructed, quite as if the matter were settled, “ and Annette and I will do the rest of the repair work.” She looked questioningly at Annette, fearful of remonstrance.

“ All right,” Annette agreed quickly, for she was secretly pleased with the idea of the Haleys owning their home and improving it.

“ And Ernest and George can help Father make the ‘ down payment,’ ” Daphne continued relentlessly.

“ Suits me,” Ernest agreed briefly, and a trifle importantly at being called upon to help bear the financial burden of the family.

“ I don’t see where all the money for repairs and payments will come from, but I hope I can have cupboards in the kitchen,” Mrs. Haley added, more cheerful than she had been when the talk started.

“ ‘ Granted ere asked,’ Mother,” George quoted. “ Cupboards are simple—four or five boards nailed up to two pieces of siding, and you order four doors to fit. Then Betty will

paint the whole a beautiful scarlet if you like it so. I know Betty is industrious, because Daphne says so,—and what Daphne says in this house *goes*.” George intoned this in his best oratorical manner, exactly as if he were reciting a part, and even Daphne laughed. There was a sympathetic quality in George’s voice that made anything he said doubly effective, which partly accounted for his success in debates—and as an insurance salesman.

“You boys could help with the payments, too?” Mr. Haley asked, and there was something pathetic in his appeal, his dependence on his sons, his own lack of confidence in himself. “If a man of my age loses his job ——”

“Sure, we could do that,” Ernest agreed easily. “I never have anything to show for my salary. I don’t know where it goes. This way I’d *have* to save.”

It occurred to Daphne that expensive theater-tickets and ball-games and four-dollar ties and athletic equipment would account for a good deal, but she knew better than to “stir things up” in such a crisis. Things were settled to her liking. Let them *stay* settled.

George looked up at the cheap pink-china clock on the shelf. Daphne had wanted it thrown out, but her mother had protested that they all wanted to know the time, and it would mean buying a new one.

"Jimmy will be waiting for me," George stated, rising from his chair. "I'll be going. Oh, Mother, suppose I ask him to come to dinner to-morrow night?"

"Of course," Mrs. Haley replied. Company for dinner was one of the things Mrs. Haley never objected to; she was thoroughly hospitable, and never stopped to offer such excuses as best table-cloths that weren't laundered, or "only lamb-stew to-morrow night."

Jimmy gladly accepted the invitation, and the next night, when he was seated at Mrs. Haley's right, looked about at the numerous company. "I don't believe I ever sat at the table with more than four or five people, until to-night," he commented. "It's a new experience."

"Come every evening while you're alone," Mrs. Haley urged. "We shall be glad to have you."

"Oh, but you have enough to do," Jimmy protested, though the idea appealed to him. He admitted to himself. It was lonesome in the big empty St. Clair house.

"I don't mind one more," Mrs. Haley said seriously.

"We'll put you to work," George threatened, "to pay for it. We're thinking of buying the house, and if we do, every one within gunshot will be doing something."

"Oh, you're going to buy it?" Jimmy inquired interestedly.

"I called up McKenzie to-day, and I think we can agree on terms." Mr. Haley tried to speak casually, but did not quite succeed. He was just a little bit important over buying a place; the pride of ownership is inherent in nearly every one, and Mr. Haley was not one of the few exceptions.

"We're going to improve it a good deal," Daphne contributed in a matter-of-fact way. "We want things right, of course."

"It's a good location," Jimmy opined. "You shouldn't have any trouble in selling it any time, if you wanted to. And that barn

would hold three or four cars, if you wanted to rent space."

"Why, so it would!" Ernest responded.

"I'll put up a sign just as soon as we get the deed," Mr. Haley decided.

"But there's a garage down at the corner, and space for a hundred cars in it," Mrs. Haley reminded.

"At ten dollars a month," George pointed out. "The Haleys think that's too much to charge, and they'll find plenty of renters to agree with them," he predicted.

"I think we ought to have a few loads of earth put on the yard, and seed it now. That will give it a start for spring." Ernest laid down his fourth ear of corn. "And we ought to put in more shrubs now. There isn't anything but weeds on the place. I'll order the earth and shrubs to-morrow."

"Stick to evergreens," Jimmy advised. "My aunt always bought things that looked nice the year round; a florist told her that. It makes a wonderful difference in a place to see those small spruces green in the winter, when other shrubs are just stalks."

"That's a good idea," Mr. Haley approved.

"Oh—oh—oh!" Betty squealed, and every one looked to see the cause of her horror. "If you rent the garage, what will become of my gymnasium?"

She looked blankly from one amused Haley to another.

"Your season's nearly over," Annette offered soothingly.

"And if the house is in good shape by spring, we'll sell it, anyway," Mr. Haley added. "And school starts soon, remember."

Betty looked downcast, however.

"I was trying to sell some insurance to a real-estate man to-day, and he got talking about land-values and owning your own home. He says national prosperity is reflected in the value of homes, and if people don't own any property, they don't get their share of the natural increase there always has been." George's handsome face was serious as he spoke.

"I suppose that is true, but when a man is more than twenty years getting nine hundred

dollars," Mr. Haley reminded, "there's some excuse for not getting your share."

Betty changed the subject by announcing, "I'm going to write to Norma as soon as the dishes are finished."

"Oh, Ernest, that reminds me, there's a letter for you on the shelf there," Mrs. Haley stated.

"I'm going to whitewash the cellar. Any one want to help?" Ernest invited, as he reached for the letter. "Dad bought some whitewash once, but we never got around to using it. I'll need the cellar now for my gym—and Betty's," he added, with an apologetic look at his youngest sister.

"I'll help with the interior decorating," Jimmy offered, but Ernest did not hear. He was looking at a long green slip of paper.

"Aha! Little Ernest wins the first prize!" he waved the check aloft.

"How much? What prize? What was your slogan?" several of the Haleys wanted to know.

"Fifty dollars for that bankers' slogan!" Ernest held up the check for inspection. "My

contribution was—let's see if I can remember it." He scratched his head.

"I joined the band of easy marks.
I fed my gold 'fish' to the sharks.

I was a sucker for their bait.
Now I repent when it's too late.

My lesson in four words I state:
Invest, but first investigate!"

There were congratulations, clapping, and more questions.

"But, Ernest, you didn't ever invest and lose, did you?" his mother demanded.

Ernest looked a trifle sheepish. "I bought two hundred dollars' worth of oil-stock." He grinned at the check. "I just got back one-fourth of it for reporting my experience," he finished.

"I told you about that contest, Ernest Haley," Betty stated meaningly, almost accusingly.

"Well—so you did. I'll give you a commission of ten dollars," Ernest agreed readily, and Betty danced with joy for a moment, then tackled the dishes.

"We'll have to clean that cellar before it's whitewashed," George suggested, and Jimmy and Ernest followed him as he started toward the dingy kitchen for a broom.

In the kitchen Jimmy saw a small table heaped with soiled dishes and pans; a dark sink, with small drain-boards; a pantry inconveniently located at one end of the large room, next the door leading out to the back; two windows, which were insufficient to light up the room, with its walls painted a dull brown. His efficient mind saw it arranged as it should be.

"We'll have to make this kitchen a little more convenient for your mother, George," he ventured. "I'm handy around a house."

"Yes. It doesn't look like the models in pictures, does it? I've promised to put in cupboards," George informed his friend, "but I don't know when I'll get around to it."

"Get the materials and I'll help you. I've been promoted from office-boy to billing-machine operator, and I sit down all day. At night I'm glad to be on my feet and move around," Jimmy explained.

By this time they were in the cellar, trying

to accustom themselves to the dim light. "Here is another old broom, George," Ernest offered.

"I'll pile up the wood and kindling you have here," Jimmy volunteered, and set to work without hesitation. He stopped, after a moment, and held up a board. "Here's a nice length for a shelf over the sink, if you have brackets and screws," he remarked.

"There's a box of junk here,—screws and bolts and old taps, parts of clocks, almost anything you can mention," George informed him, indicating a soap-box sitting on the floor.

"But no brackets," Jimmy announced, after turning the contents over carefully.

"I'll get some at the hardware store tomorrow," George promised easily,—a trifle too easily, Jimmy thought.

He was wondering how long this sudden spurt of energy, on the part of the Haleys, would last. He knew something of their carelessness and easy acceptance of things as they were. Habit is strong, and he knew that the family probably would relapse into its old way of letting things go.

"Isn't Lammert's hardware store open to-night?" he inquired. "It's only around the corner. I could run over," he offered.

"Oh, no! I'll go," George objected, seeing that the matter was not to be dropped. "I'll get screws, too," and he started off.

"Get an extra brush, so I can whitewash," Jimmy counseled. "We can finish it to-night."

When George returned with the materials, he stopped Betty's dish-washing long enough to put up the shelf over the sink. "There, Mother, that will hold a glass and a clock and your scouring-powder and face-powder,—and a lot more things." He smiled at her, and returned to the cellar.

As Jimmy worked with a broom in the cellar, he thought of his Aunt Selina's words. "People who live 'in rent' are apt to get slack," she would say. "Anybody can buy some kind of a little place." Aunt Selina always had been positive of speech and tender of heart. Maybe it did make people careless, not having a place to work on, Jimmy reflected. No one wants to put work on another person's house.

CHAPTER XI

BLUE BELL

As the weeks passed, Norma learned more of Blue Bell's ambitions, for the two had become fast friends. On the Saturday morning before Norma's last week of vacation, the girls were talking in Blue Bell's hut. The hotel guests had scattered, and there were no customers; Norma was careful not to take up her friend's time when there were prospective purchasers about.

"I have many hopes and many problems, Norma. I want my people educated. See that little Henry?" She pointed to a serious, bright-faced youngster of nine, who somehow stood out from the rest, Norma thought. "His parents had brains; they went to college, and planned to do much for our people. But the father died in the Great War, the mother two years ago, and now Henry lives with Grey Feather, who has no imagination."

Norma tried to hide a smile, yet was caught with the idea. "No imagination!" When Blue Bell said it, it seemed important. Apparently one must have imagination, if one would succeed, according to Blue Bell's philosophy. Norma had heard something similar, or read it, perhaps. The image is first, the vision, then the act, the achievement.

"At school," Blue Bell continued, "I have a very fine teacher. She knows my plans, and talks to me. She says people must 'see' first, in their minds, what they would do; they must plan; they must imagine."

The girl stopped abruptly, as she had a habit of doing in the midst of these confidential talks. She had talked a great deal for her. But something seemed to be troubling her, and she began again.

"This winter I must find something to do. Early in September we close our little shops. Most of the Iroquois go to Montreal for the winter; some of the men stay there on farms all summer. My father is there now, but he is too old to work much."

As she talked, Blue Bell looked so troubled

that Norma somehow read between the lines and caught her meaning. She lacked means, and could not finish her schooling unless she could work part time; it was on her mind.

It piqued Norma that she could think of nothing to suggest. There must be something Blue Bell could do. She felt sure the Indian girl would not have confided so much to every one.

At lunch-time Norma carried her friend's problem back to the hotel, where she found a letter waiting her.

"From Betty. Oh!" She tore it open and read:

"DEAR NORM:

"Why did you go away when there are so many things happening?

"I was glad to hear from you, and so interested in your letter that I read it to all my gym kids. They think they've been there, you described the people and place so well.

"My gym is a great success, and Elaine is helping me. But I must give it up soon, for we have bought this house, and Father is going to rent the garage—*my gym!* However, school starts soon, and there will not be much time for anything else.

"Can't you imagine Daphne bossing everybody? It does me good to watch her.

"To-day I enameled my room and furniture a nice ivory. You won't know it when you see it. I'm buying drapes and curtains, too, and all out of the money I've earned. To-night the carefully-nurtured Betty sleeps on the floor.

"George and Jimmy are putting cupboards in the kitchen, and we intend painting the walls and woodwork white. Jimmy comes every night for dinner. He fits in so nicely, I can't help wishing he had been a Haley.

"Ernest and Father are fixing the yard and the porch, and we're having two extra windows put in the kitchen,—Jimmy's idea.

"I made Ernest give me ten dollars for telling him about the prize contest you mentioned. He won the first prize—fifty dollars.

"Your Blue Bell interests me strangely, possibly because you make her sound so romantic. I'd be a wee bit jealous of the way you love her, if I had time, but you can see for yourself all the things I have on my mind,—and you don't know *all*, dearie.

"High school opens in two weeks. Glad or sorry, Norm?

"We had a card from Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie in New England. They may stop here on their way back. Believe thou me, they'll never know their poor relations!

“Last, but not least, I’ve got a secret. Oh, Norm! I can hardly keep it, it’s so good. No. You needn’t look for a postscript. It’s a *surprise!* Love from

“BETTY.”

“Betty has a surprise. She won’t tell me,” Norma informed her parents as she sat down to lunch.

When her father and mother exchanged knowing glances, Norma wondered why. It must concern Jimmy, she decided.

“Maybe I can find out what it is, Norma. I’m going back for a few days,” her father announced, but Norma was not impressed.

She told the news of the letter, and, when they had discussed it, Norma returned to Blue Bell and her troubles.

“Mother, you’re smart,” Norma cajoled. “Can’t you think of anything?”

“M-m—I might,” her mother conceded cautiously.

They were sitting on the veranda, waiting for the gong to sound for lunch. There was silence for a few moments, during which Norma was sure her mother was trying to think

of something, though she looked unconcerned. Of course, Norma reasoned, a person could look indifferent and still be thinking hard; it was only in stories that people had to scowl before their thinking did them any good.

Admiring her mother as she did, Norma could not help comparing her with other women she knew. Mrs. St. Clair was placid; she did not wiggle and shuffle, the way so many women did. The girl recalled an article she had read once on repose of manner; the writer had objected to faces and hands and feet that worked in annoying ways. "Do something or keep quiet," she had admonished, "but don't offend people by tapping your feet or biting your lips or fussing with your hair. It may cost you your job, or your social position, or your sweetheart, or whatever it is you want most." And Norma decided that her mother had repose of manner. She sat now, with her hands folded in her lap, her feet on the floor, her head, with its heavy dark hair streaked with silver, resting against the high back of her chair. Her sallow face was thoughtful.

Mrs. St. Clair's words brought the girl out

of her reverie. "Your Blue Bell could sell twice as much right here, if she carried the kind of stock summer people want."

"What kind?" Norma demanded eagerly.

"Well, there's no place to get stationery or post-cards or birthday-cards, or gifts for youngsters, except the bows and arrows. There are no books to read, no circulating library, and every one has time to read up here."

While the gong sounded, Norma considered this; it did seem to offer a big opportunity to Blue Bell. They went in to lunch, the girl considering her mother's words. "That will be fine for another year, Mother, but for this season it's too late to talk about it. I'll tell Blue Bell, of course."

Later Norma, leaning on the narrow, rough board counter, told Blue Bell of her mother's suggestions. The Indian girl nodded and looked off for a long moment, absent-mindedly folding the Toronto paper she had been reading.

"You say it is too late. If the gift-shop business is good for a summer hotel, why would it not appeal to the city hotel in winter? At

the teachers' training-school, hours are short. If I had space in some good hotel, I could attend to it, and study between sales."

"Yes," Norma cried excitedly. "There is a gift-shop in our biggest hotel. And, oh, Blue Bell, you would be in time for the Christmas trade!"

Blue Bell was very nearly excited herself, for her black eyes were shining. "My stock here will do, and I can add to it. I believe it can be done!"

"Oh, Miss St. Clair!"

Norma turned, to see Otto Hoyer, two tennis-rackets in his hands.

"We want one more for tennis. You play?" he inquired in a hopeful tone.

"Yes. I'll come," she agreed, and turned to Blue Bell, who was handing a gorgeous purple-and-white waste-basket to a prospective buyer. "See you later, Blue Bell," and she was off.

On Saturday, three days later, Mr. St. Clair returned from his short business trip with an astonishing load in his car. First, Norma saw only Betty, grinning triumphantly from ear to ear, and showing her even teeth.

“Was it a surprise, Norm?” she wanted to know.

“Why, Betty Baines Haley! How dared you keep it from me?” Norma demanded, as she kissed her friend. Over Betty’s shoulder she saw Jimmy, as he straightened up from the floor of the car, where he had crouched.

“Oh, Jimmy! We’ll have a wonderful time,” Norma exclaimed delightedly. “I’m so glad you came, Jim. I can swim, and there are so many things to show you!”

“And we meet the wonderful Blue Bell, I suppose?” Betty queried.

“If you’re especially good, and are sure you appreciate the privilege,” Norma promised.

“I’ve wanted to lock horns with her ever since I heard of her,” Betty admitted inelegantly, borrowing one of Ernest’s choice idioms.

Jimmy chuckled appreciatively. “Don’t let them meet unless I’m around,” he implored Norma. “Something tells me they are well matched.”

“Come on, Betty and Jimmy. Get your bathing-suits on, and let’s go in. There’s time

before dinner," and Norma led the way, still wondering how it all had been arranged, yet almost too happy to care.

But Betty left nothing to the imagination. She took Norma's arm and began at the beginning. "Your mother wrote that your father was coming for a day or two, and would bring me back if I could arrange to come. She said it wouldn't cost much, as I could share your room. I told you about the money Ernest gave me, and I hadn't spent all of my summer money, so the family said I had earned a vacation,—and here I am. Your father insisted on Jimmy's having a week before he started back to school."

"Oh, I'm so *glad*," Norma cried, squeezing Betty's hand hard. "Blue Bell is good company; she knows absolutely everything there is to be known, Betty—earthquakes, birds, mathematics. Ask her anything!" Norma exaggerated. "*She* reads to try to find out everything there is to be known. *We* just read for fun."

Betty looked duly impressed, in spite of the allowance that must be made for Norma's en-

thusiasm; she exaggerated, herself, on what she considered suitable occasions.

In ten minutes Betty had unpacked, undressed, and jumped into a bathing-suit. The girls ran down the three flights of stairs and were met by Jimmy, who said he had been waiting seven minutes, and that he had unpacked his grip, besides.

“I thought it would be much cooler up here, Norma,” Betty remarked, as they dropped their bath-robcs on the dock and started for the water.

“It would be, but there hasn’t been any rain in two months. Oh, Betty! There’s hardly a night that we don’t see a fire somewhere. Two hotels have burned down, and there are forest-fires galore.”

But fires were forgotten in the swimming and splashing that followed. Spying Blue Bell through the trees, Norma had waved frantically for her to come. Rather slowly, for there was a certain shyness about her when with these strange people of another race, Blue Bell had come, leaving her shop in the care of an adoring friend. Norma introduced Jimmy

and Betty to her, and did not miss the appraising glance that the latter sent with her greeting, which was so cordial that Blue Bell smiled happily.

“I’ll race you over to the other pier, Blue Bell,” she challenged instantly, in her friendly way.

Blue Bell’s eyes lighted up as she plunged into the water and waited for Jimmy to count three. They were off, Norma and Jimmy smiling as they watched the pair. It was a good two hundred feet to the pier where the big boats docked, and, for more than half the distance, the girls were abreast, but as they neared the pier, the watchers saw Blue Bell creep ahead, until she finally touched the landing with two lengths to spare. Yet Betty returned with shining eyes, as pleased as if she had won, and with a new respect for Blue Bell, as she had for any one who could outdo her, true sport that she was. Even Jimmy looked admiringly at the strange girl.

“I’ll have to tune up,” Betty admitted as she reached the small floating dock used by bathers. “We’ll try this again to-morrow.”

During the next half hour Norma was glad she could swim, even a little. It was fun, especially with people she knew and liked, as she did these three friends. Neither Betty nor Blue Bell allowed Jimmy to perform any trick without imitating him instantly. The sun was warm, and the four care-free young people enjoyed every minute of the sport.

When Blue Bell left, to look after her shop, the three musicians joined the party. "We'll call on you after dinner," Norma promised the Indian girl as she started to leave.

"That reminds me—I'm nearly starved," Betty observed.

"You'll be glad you are, when you see the meals they serve here," Norma assured her.

Later Betty found ample proof of her chum's statement.

"I recognize some of the people you described, Norma," Betty declared, looking around the big dining-hall.

"So far we aren't sorry we came, are we, Betty?" Jimmy queried, smilingly, as he finished a huge piece of berry pie.

"I will be if you eat all night, Jim," Norma

interposed. "Come on, you haven't seen the North country at all!"

Reluctantly Jimmy left the table, and the three strolled down through the village, as it was called, the newcomers taking their time and looking at the odd wares offered.

"Blue Bell!" Norma called, for the Indian girl was not in sight.

At Norma's call she appeared from the rear of the hut where she slept and ate.

"Can you come for a walk up on the rocks? We want to walk around before the sun goes down, and you can tell about things better than I can," Norma coaxed.

"First, I must ask my friend Eva to take care of my shop," the older girl returned, and a moment later joined them.

"Take us up the short cut you know, Blue Bell. It's queer it can't be seen from here," she explained to the other two, "and there is only one other way to get up,—that long path you see down the road."

They looked up at the sheer cliff which rose straight up behind the hotel and Indian huts. In another moment Blue Bell was leading the

way, dodging behind trees and bushes, up the steep, rocky path. Suddenly they came on the great table of granite which stretched away to wilderness, and which was broken only by small shrubs and an occasional stunted tree.

“This goes right on to the end of nowhere,” Norma informed them impressively. “You could get lost in ten minutes. There’s just rock and rock and rock, right up to the brass rail that surrounds the North Pole.”

“Why aren’t there any small stones?” Betty demanded, in the tone of one who felt cheated. “Everything looks as clean as if it had been swept.”

As Norma did not know the answer, Blue Bell replied for her. “This granite is the hardest kind of rock, and does not break easily. It has been thrown up from the bottom of the earth, and is the oldest formation. There is gold in it,—help yourself,” she added mischievously.

“See the juniper berries and kinnikinnick,” Norma pointed out. “Little else grows.” She picked a spray of the low spiny juniper, loaded

with blue berries, and some of the gay red berries of the kinnikinnick.

"It's like another world, up here," Betty exclaimed delightedly. "One minute you're down near a hotel and autos and people, and the lake, and the next, you're up in the wilderness!"

"There, look at the sun!" Norma cried. "It's red-looking; the sunsets are always prettier up here. Just see the reflection in the lake below us!"

As they talked, they walked over the smooth hard granite, and over dead trees which had struggled for existence on the scant supply of earth in crevices.

"I notice the trees just grow about so big and then die," Jimmy remarked, looking at twisted, stunted oaks and pines.

"They are like people," Blue Bell ventured, with a far-off look in her eyes. "If they limit themselves to just a little poor soil, they are dwarfed, mentally or physically. We must take in before we try to give off." She looked about apologetically, as if she had been caught thinking aloud, and explained: "The teacher

who has helped me so much told me something like that. The trees reminded me of it."

"If it's true of a tree, I guess it is of a human being," Jimmy opined sagely.

As the sun dropped slowly down into a patch of evergreen, they sat down to watch it, without speaking, for the place had cast a spell over them. Then dusk came, and Blue Bell arose. "We had better go before it is quite dark," she suggested.

They started after her, and as she reached the edge of the cliff, she paused. "What's that?" she demanded sharply of no one in particular. "A fire started?"

In the woods beyond the huts was a tiny patch of flame. Whether there was any one near it, they could not see yet.

"Hurry," Blue Bell commanded, and set an example which they found it difficult to follow.

They scrambled down the narrow rocky path, and when they caught up with Blue Bell, she was beating with a stick. "Norma, get brooms and call the people." The others caught up sticks and began.

Pulling off her own shabby sweater, Blue Bell wrapped it on her stick, the better to beat out the rapidly-spreading flames. One must see a match dropped on dry grass to know how quickly the fire spreads to a terrifying circle. The three worked at the outer edges, Blue Bell giving the orders.

“Never mind that side! It's toward the rocks, and the fire will die at the cliff. Scrape away the dead leaves!”

In three minutes Norma's message produced results. Not a soul in that vicinity but knew the dread meaning of a forest fire in a region where there had been no rain in two months. The hotel people came with sticks picked up on their way, and the Indians appeared with brooms. The fire was thirty feet in diameter when the crowd reached it and began to work.

Norma saw Mr. Chorman run out from his big summer home on the west of the huts, and motion to Jimmy to follow him. He said a few words of explanation, and they ran, returning in a few moments with two hand-extinguishers which Norma later learned were from his launch and his house. The chemicals



PULLING OFF HER OWN SHABBY SWEATER, BLUE BELL WRAPPED IT AROUND HER STICK.—*Page 160,*

sprayed on the edge of the crackling flames slowed down their progress, and encouraged the fire-fighters in what had looked, a moment before, like a hopeless effort.

When the fire was finally under control, it had spread to within a dozen feet of the hotel.

“What started this?” Mr. Chorman demanded, when there was time to talk.

And Norma, who knew him best, answered, “Blue Bell saw it first from the top of the cliff.”

Mr. Chorman turned questioningly to the Indian girl, who was wiping her forehead with a blackened handkerchief, and leaving unbecoming streaks.

“I saw two men walk down the road. I think one of them must have dropped a match,” she explained, frowning until her usually placid brow was wrinkled.

“Then Blue Bell started bossing us all around, and the fire is out,” Betty summed up briefly, and not without a flicker of amusement in her eyes.

Blue Bell smiled acknowledgment, and

walked toward her hut. To her the incident was closed.

"So Blue Bell saved my place," Mr. Chorman stated musingly. "I wonder if she'd be offended if I tried to reward her?"

Norma's heart pounded. She was embarrassed, but knew she must speak; it was opportunity, and might never offer itself again. Things were taking shape in Norma's mind. Mr. Chorman, for one thing, owned a big department store in Montreal. His beautiful home had been saved, and he was grateful.

"Mr. Chorman," Norma began shyly, "she really needs help. She's trying to attend school and support herself at the same time. She wants to start a little gift-shop in Montreal." It sounded horribly crude to Norma, after she had said it.

"I see," Mr. Chorman nodded. "And all I have to do is to stock it up and let her run it. I think something can be managed," he concluded, and walked off, after thanking them all.

"You bold thing!" Betty accused, when he had left.

"Oh, Betty, was I?" Norma cried aghast,

her eyes pleading with Betty to change her opinion.

Betty threw a comforting arm around her friend. "No, of course not. Only I didn't think you had the nerve; I knew it was hard work for you, and I believe Mr. Chorman knew it, too."

Jimmy walked off ahead of the girls, his hands in his pockets.

"Look, Norm, he's strutting because Mr. Chorman chose him to get the fire-extinguisher and operate it," Betty whispered.

"Oh, I don't think so," Norma objected, sorry for Jimmy that he should be accused of such a thing.

"I *know* it," Betty returned. "I've got two brothers, and it doesn't take *anything* to make them strut. They're all alike," she pronounced sagely.

CHAPTER XII

IN HIGH AT LAST

ON her way back to the city, Norma's thoughts were divided between the care-free days just past, and the high-school days to come. She had visions of Betty on the basketball team, of Jimmy winning honors, and of herself in the many high-school affairs of which she had heard so much from other girls.

Already Jimmy and Betty were talking of what they intended to take up this year, and, although Norma could not join in, she was consoled by the thought that soon she would be a part of it all.

On her first day in high school Norma was duly impressed by the size of the building, as compared with that of the grade school, by the seven hundred faces, nearly all of which were strange, and by the great dignified assembly-room where the principal presided. To Norma he looked like a business man who had strayed in and could not find his way out; he looked

unhappy, as if he belonged somewhere else, and knew it.

Away on the right sat the seniors; and it seemed to the new girl that it would be ages before she could sit there and be looked up to by envious freshmen and sophomores, and less envious juniors, who had almost arrived.

When the notices being read did not concern her, Norma glanced about her, and observed that the seniors did not fill their section. At the extreme left there were two sections just of freshmen, then most of a section occupied by sophomores. Back of the sophomore and senior divisions sat the juniors, who were divided into those who had completed part of their third year of work, and those who were just entering their third year.

According to that, Norma reasoned, about half the students in the first and second years dropped out. Norma wondered why—whether they had to work, or did not like high school.

From her seat in the sophomore section, Betty looked around once and smiled at Elaine and Norma, who sat next to each other. A black-haired snub-nosed boy left his seat in the

freshman section and asked a question of one of the teachers standing near an exit. It was the officious Howard Miller, who always insisted on special privileges and special instructions, and attracted as much attention to himself as possible.

Beside Howard Miller was Victor Harcourt, who also had been in Norma's classes. He was big and dressy and really bright, but talked nonsense incessantly; Miss Rice had told him once that he had everything but good judgment. In front of Norma was an overgrown boy, wearing clothes a trifle too small; Norma learned later that his name was Howard M. Hayes, and that he had recently moved to the outskirts of Newbury. His father was paralyzed, and Howard ran a small farm and attended school as well.

A senior girl played a march, and the assembly filed out to classes. At the end of the morning Norma possessed an algebra, a copy of "Ivanhoe," an English rhetoric, and a Latin grammar, and felt less bewildered. She decided she would like it, all but the algebra, which did not seem so human. There were no

people in mathematics, and Norma was partial to people. At noon school was dismissed in order that teachers might go over registrations and arrange classes.

But by the next noon, when the entire student body had gathered in the gymnasium for lunch, school-life proper began, or so it seemed to Norma. Howard M. Hayes was surrounded by a crowd of boys, with Howard Miller and Victor Harcourt as leaders. "Now if you put sugar on your hands, it will coax your sleeves down, Hayes," Victor remarked helpfully.

"But, my dear Harcourt," Howard Miller remonstrated in affected tones, "they aren't being worn that way in the country!"

Of the students in the gymnasium, a few were smiling, but the rest, judging from their frowns, were filled with silent indignation. Then the principal strolled casually from the corner reserved for the teachers at lunch-time, and stopped at the group, which dispersed instantly.

Howard Hayes' face was white and set, and his big hands below the short sleeves were

clenched. Norma turned indignantly to Betty. "Do things like that often happen? Don't people like Victor Harcourt and Howard Miller ever put themselves in the place of an unfortunate person like Howard Hayes?" she asked.

"It won't happen again," Betty assured her. "Mr. Yates meant business when he went over there, and probably would have said something if it hadn't been for embarrassing Howard Hayes."

In another five minutes the assembly-bell had rung, and the student-body moved slowly up the stairs to classes. Norma and Elaine entered their English class, to see Howard Miller and Howard Hayes already there, the former still tormenting.

"Howard M. Hicks your name is, I believe?" he was saying, in what he considered a very superior tone.

Miss Hendricks, the English teacher, looked at the two from shrewd, kindly eyes. She wore her hair in a funny iron-grey roll off her forehead, and was partial to grey or brown cloth dresses. She had lived near Newbury all her

life, and was the friend of every one who ever had known her.

“Why do you two disagree?” she began mildly, so mildly that no one suspected that she was about to throw a bomb.

There was no answer from the boys, and the rest of the class looked expectant.

“Aren’t you cousins?” she pursued.

“Hardly,” Howard Miller returned curtly.

“Possibly not,” Miss Hendricks admitted in her easy way, “but I noticed on Mr. Hayes’ record that his full name is Howard Miller Hayes, and he comes from Frontenac, Nebraska. That is where Mr. Miller’s cousin, Marian Miller, went to teach, and I know she married a man named Hayes. I just wondered if you weren’t related.”

The class was breathless. The two Howards glanced at one another, and then looked away quickly. Howard Miller’s face was a study. He realized that he had made a laughing-stock of one of the unfortunate members of the proud old Miller family, and that he never should hear the end of it. His face was nearly as white as his cousin’s.

Excitedly Norma leaned over to Elaine and whispered: "I know more than *that*. I'll tell you later."

For the first time since she could remember, Norma found it difficult to keep her mind on an English lesson. *She* had a bomb to throw, and it would cause as much excitement as Miss Hendricks' had. Howard Miller was not paying attention, either, for what Norma knew, *he* knew, and it did not make matters any more pleasant.

When the class was dismissed, Elaine could hardly wait to reach the hall, where talking was permitted between classes, to inquire, "What else do you know, Norma?"

"Oh, only that Howard Miller Hayes is entitled to a full half of the Miller property their great-grandfather left—*and interest*," Norma laughed. "I can't quite piece it all out, but evidently Miss Hendricks was the only one who knew of Marian Miller's marriage. Father talked quite a lot about it all, when their great-grandfather died, and I know they couldn't find any trace of Marian Miller or her heirs, and I think that farm Howard

Hayes and his father are living on now belonged to Marian—from her mother's side. They've probably been rather desperate, and thought they would try to work it. It isn't good land—all run out."

"Oh, Norm, I hope you've got it straight. I hope they are cousins. Howard Miller thought so; you could see that from his crest-fallen look." Elaine danced happily into her next class.

The story spread with the rapidity that might have been expected, after the happening in the gymnasium. Howard Hayes became Howard Miller, third, because the real Howard Miller had once introduced himself as Howard Miller, third. The students who had laughed at Howard Miller Hayes, laughed louder at Howard Miller, who had ridiculed his own cousin, for the students accepted the explanation without question.

It would never be forgotten. For years after, pupils who criticized others would be told the classic story, and admonished to "be careful, he may be your cousin."

Norma proved to be right about the legal de-

tails connected with the division of property. The great-grandfather of the two Howards had died at the age of ninety-four, without a will. Marian Miller had taught school in various cities in the West, and had corresponded less frequently as the years passed. Miss Hendricks, who had once taught in the same school with her, knew her married name, but apparently did not know that she was heiress to half the very considerable Miller property. Mr. Miller always had been the favorite.

"It's a wonder S.A.K.A. didn't know it," Betty remarked on the third day of school, as the girls walked home.

"What's that?" Norma and Elaine asked in one breath.

"Sees All—Knows All. That's what we call Miss Hendricks,—and she does," Betty finished succinctly; "but this one important little item escaped her."

"It isn't often the smart alecks get taken down the way Howard Miller did," Norma commented.

"Oh, I don't know," Betty objected. "There was Dorothy Long. I never saw her,

but they still quote her,—I do myself. She was in line one day, going up to assembly, and some one crowded her. She turned around and said, ‘Do you realize that I am the mayor’s daughter!’ If she lives to be a hundred, she won’t live it down. We still say it on the slightest provocation, and they say the girls took pains to let Dorothy hear it. No,” Betty concluded, “you can’t fool any one very long. Too many people object to seeing any one put on airs.”

They had reached Betty’s house. “Oh, come on up and see my room, girls,” she invited.

“Notice how we hang back?” Elaine inquired, as they followed her promptly up the shabby, unpainted steps.

“We’re going to paint the steps and veranda, but the boys haven’t got around to it yet,” Betty apologized.

At the door of Betty’s room they stopped, astonished. The odd pieces, which never had combined very well, had been turned into an ivory set with clever flower-designs in black and rose, with touches of blue, stencilled on

each piece. There were a blue bedspread and new curtains and draperies.

"Oh, Betty, it's darling!" Norma admired. "I love it."

Betty looked gratified. "Daphne painted the designs on the bed and dresser and chair-back, and I did the enamelling and the wood-work. Annette furnished the bedspread; and the curtains and drapes I bought. Aren't we stylish?" she inquired happily. "The rag-carpet doesn't look so bad, with everything else fresh, does it? We sent it to the laundry."

Downstairs there was little sign of improvement. The cupboards were in, but unpainted; the dull-brown walls remained dull-brown, and the scuffy linoleum looked discouraged and abused.

When Norma reached home, Jimmy was on the veranda, wrestling with trigonometry.

"You beat me home, Jimmy. I stopped at Betty's to see her room; it's all fixed up pretty." She sat down beside Jimmy on the big gay veranda-seat.

Jimmy looked interested, and waited for her to go on.

“ Somehow I thought they’d have more done. It does seem, with seven of them ——” she stopped.

Not for worlds would she have criticized Betty’s family before her parents, or any one else; they might misunderstand. But with Jimmy it was different. Boys seldom “sit in judgment,” she had noticed.

“ I knew the improving sprint wouldn’t last,” Jimmy opined sagely. “ Aunt Selina used to say that laziness could not be overcome in a day or a month or a year. It’s habit, and when you really want to do things, the habit of not doing them is so strong, it won’t let you. Was the kitchen painted? ” he inquired.

Norma shook her head. “ I don’t see how Mrs. Haley can work in the dingy place. No wonder she’s pessimistic. Too much brown would make the world look dark to any one. What is it called—the color of sacrifice? ”

But Jimmy was too busy with his own thoughts to answer directly.

“ They need some one to urge them on. They’ll make a real profit on that house if they half try,” Jimmy predicted. “ But I’m afraid

nothing but an earthquake will stir them up, if they've lost interest already."

At exactly 2:07 P. M. on the following Saturday the earthquake was recorded on the Haleys' private seismograph. Betty and Elaine had joined Norma in a "mending-bee," as they called it, for Norma had found mending a really pleasant occupation when accompanied by plenty of conversation. Furthermore, with all three taking sewing in high school, as they would be in a week, the mending-bees might be justified in assuming a more dignified name. Betty, who had had a year of sewing in high school, talked of making herself a dress, and Norma and Elaine were urging her to begin.

At this point the telephone rang, and Jimmy, who had been cutting the grass, answered it. "Annette is calling Betty," he announced, coming out from the hall.

"Hope it isn't something more to do," Betty remarked fervently, as she dropped her work and skipped inside, to return a moment later, her good-natured, freckled face shining with excitement.

"Guess!" she commanded.

"Sold the house!" Norma offered wildly.

"Got a new gymnasium!" Jimmy guessed. He had waited out of sheer curiosity.

"Elaine, your turn," Betty directed.

"There isn't much left," Elaine complained.

"Daphne promoted?"

"All wrong! Uncle Herbert and Aunt Minnie are coming—probably next Saturday; they're motoring back from New England. *Now* Daphne will make us step around," she opined, not without a little satisfaction in her tone, for Betty loved Daphne, and she loved to see things moving.

Norma and Jimmy exchanged glances that seemed to say, "The earthquake—maybe it will stir things up."

Betty's needle raced for a few minutes.

"Is he really a senator—your uncle, I mean?" Elaine queried.

"Not only a senator, but a millionaire and a Haley—distinguished, any way you look at him!" Betty laughed. "And Daph doesn't want him to be ashamed of us. There'll be a council of war when Daphne gets home to-

night, or"—there was a mischievous glint in her green-grey eyes,—“shall I go down to the store and tell her?”

In Norma's brown eyes there was a reflection of the fun in Betty's. “Do you think you ought to go 'way down there alone, when Elaine and I are just dying to see the effect on Daphne?”

“Come on,” Betty cried, and the three bundled their sewing into a convenient magazine-rack and started off.

As they passed Jimmy, Norma remarked coolly, “Jim, you've cut that grass near the veranda three times. Do you know it?”

“You were gossiping so hard you couldn't possibly have counted,” Jimmy retorted, with an attempt at a hostile expression.

On the third floor of Downs, Cotter, and Field's, Daphne was sketching a frock to be used as an illustration in the next day's advertisement. She smiled sweetly as the three girls approached.

“She has no idea what's going to happen to her,” Betty murmured gently.

When her sister had imparted the news,

Daphne made no immediate response, but her eyes became fixed and purposeful. She was planning a campaign.

Norma stood, waiting for the oracle to speak, and thinking what a blessed privilege it was to know the Haleys.

“Isn’t she pretty?” Elaine whispered.

“Just beautiful!” Norma replied.

Betty heard and smiled, and looked approvingly at Daphne in her soft, dark-blue cloth dress, with its hand-made creamy white collar and cuffs. If Daphne had only one dress, it would be dainty and in good order, and appropriate for almost anywhere. Daphne’s brown hair was always shining, and her pliant, friendly-looking hands well kept. She emerged from her trance now.

“Get white enamel,—two quarts of it for the kitchen woodwork,—and two extra brushes; and get a quart of light grey, and we’ll paint that linoleum. I’ll pay you for it, Betty. Get some veranda-paint, and *make* George use it, Betty. *Make* him. Pester him. He likes peace, you know.”

Betty giggled. “I’ll make him unhappy.

Trust me, dear Daphne, if that's the way to handle him."

"I'll bring home some yellow gingham; I saw some clever little curtains for a kitchen. And, Betty, you might hint to Father to mend the fence, if he isn't too tired. Tell him you'll paint it. You *will*, won't you, Betty?"

"Love it," Betty admitted.

"I'll help," Norma offered.

"So will I," Elaine chimed in. "Everybody loves to paint a fence. Isn't it funny!"

When Norma reached home near dinner-time, Jimmy was waiting for her. "Did the Haleys hold their council of war?" he asked.

"Daphne held it for them," Norma replied succinctly.

"They're an interesting lot," Jimmy mused; "bright, every one of them, and all somewhat lazy but the redoubtable Betty and Daphne. Some day we're going to brag about knowing Daphne. What orders did Daphne give?"

"Jimmy Rogers, you're more curious about the Haleys than I am, and that's bad enough," Norma accused.

As Jimmy was too honest to deny this,

Norma continued: "They're to do the kitchen and the veranda and that great long fence before Monday night. After that——" she stopped.

"Daphne will have thought up plenty more, —enough to keep an army of Haleys going," Jimmy contributed correctly.

The following Saturday morning Jimmy and Norma were too restless to talk; they both longed to be at the scene of action.

"If we were a few years younger, we could go and hang around and see Uncle Herbert and Aunt Min arrive," Jimmy sighed profoundly.

"With all his money, Uncle Herbert could do a lot for them if he wanted to," Norma burst out indignantly.

"But suppose they didn't have an Uncle Herbert?" Jimmy objected reasonably. "They're not sickly, and they're better equipped mentally than the average person. They shouldn't need any help. I think Uncle Herbert has his reasons," Jimmy observed darkly.

"You talk like Father," Norma accused.

“Your father is like Aunt Selina,—and neither one of them has any use for an idler. Aunt Selina used to quote Marcus Aurelius or somebody: ‘A man must stand erect—not be kept erect by others.’ I judge from what you told me that Uncle Herbert is trying to help them to help themselves. If they make good, I predict that he will do a lot for them. It’s going to be fun watching.”

“H’m! I never thought of that,” Norma admitted slowly. “He and Aunt Min will be surprised to see the house. Betty took me in last night, and the new kitchen cupboards are all shining white, and the floor is painted. Daphne painted the chairs and table yellow, and made yellow curtains. I believe Mrs. Haley is more cheerful already because of the kitchen!”

“They were about ready to stop improvements when they got word that Uncle Herbert and Aunt Min were coming,” Jimmy commented. “I wonder what their next sprint will be, if any.”

On Monday, when Norma next saw Betty, she could hardly wait to hear the news, but the

latter did not keep her long in suspense. They were on their way to school.

“Got lots to tell you, Norm,” Betty said, when the younger girl stopped to call for her. “The folks came, and they were too surprised to speak at first. Aunt Min was crazy over the kitchen; she says women ought to have nice kitchens to work in. She whispered to Daphne at lunch-time, and I found out afterwards that she asked her what Mother would like most for the house. Daphne is truthful, so she said dishes, and didn’t Aunt Min go back to the store with her and pick out a gorgeous set of dishes for Mother, and they came right out that afternoon—the dishes, I mean. We’ve used them, and they work fine,” Betty finished all in one breath.

Norma laughed at the idea of dishes that might not work, and Betty looked gratified that her joke was well received.

“That’s just the beginning. Aunt Min had dress-goods for each of us—pink for an evening gown for Daphne—she almost cried over it, because it’s her first evening gown—and dark-blue velvet for Annette. Annette is go-

ing to the charity ball. She'll look stunning, Daphne says, and when Daphne uses slang, you know she means it. And there's a golden-brown silk crêpe for me—for my very best. And we've got to make them ourselves, Aunt Min says!"

Norma thought of Jimmy's words, "Help them to help themselves," and it did look like it.

"Now we come to the house," Betty resumed, a world of satisfaction in her voice that she had so many things to tell. "We told them we'd bought it, and Uncle Herbert said 'Good! Fine!' And when Daphne said we were going to fix it up and sell it at a profit, Uncle Herbert said he would double whatever profit we make. And George told him it was too bad he'd spoken, because now Daphne will see that we make twice as much profit. And Daphne blushed; she was terribly embarrassed. Uncle Herbert just laughed, and said that suited him; it would all be in the Haley family, anyway. Ernest said he didn't believe Daphne had any intention of letting us sell it; she just wanted it fixed up to suit herself, and was hold-

ing out the talk of profit, like a carrot before a balky horse!”

Everything seemed to corroborate what Jimmy had said, Norma noticed. Evidently Uncle Herbert knew it would be fatal to do too much helping.

“Jimmy said we’d all brag some day about knowing Daphne. He says she will make good,” Norma repeated.

“I brag *now*,” Betty laughed, pleased with the compliment. “She’s my favorite relative!”

CHAPTER XIII

ANNETTE'S VENTURE

BETTY, Norma, and Elaine had been doing their mending together on Saturday afternoons; then the dresses Aunt Min had brought had to be made, so Norma and Betty were invited to take their work to the Haleys. Annette, who was a genius at such things, was to cut out Betty's dress and her own. Carma Hartland had tried to coax Betty to go out, but, finding her adamant, had ended by taking her sewing over to join the group of workers.

"I should think you would be afraid to cut into that nice goods, Annette," Norma worried, as she saw Annette, scissors in hand, ready to tackle the golden silk spread out on the dining-room table. Annette shook her fair bobbed head and laughed.

"It's simple. Find the right and wrong sides, if any, the up and down of the goods, if there's a pattern or a nap, and then remember right and left, if it's sleeves, or if there are two

sides, like a Russian dress. If there's no right and wrong, or up and down, you can cut the smaller parts out of all sorts of queer corners, and save goods," she explained.

As she talked, Annette cut close to the edge of her pattern and handed Betty the pieces. "Baste a line down the middle of the waist where I put the pins; always know where the middle of the front and back are. Then baste those shoulder and underarm seams together."

Turning to her own blue velvet, Annette held it up for them to see. "Now this has a nap, and all the pieces must run the same way. It looks darker one way, so I must cut all the pieces in the same direction."

"I wish I could make a dress," Norma announced. "It looks so easy with some one to boss."

"Bring some goods next Saturday, and I'll help you," Annette offered. "I love to cut the goods and fit people, but I don't like the detail work," she admitted. "If you don't want to experiment on new goods, bring an old dress of your mother's to make over for yourself. That will be good practice."

Confidently she laid out her own goods and cut carefully, then turned to Betty, who was holding up her basted garment. "Now, Betty, slip it on, and I'll fit it before you stitch it up."

As Betty obeyed, she directed, "Make me look slim, please."

"All right," Annette agreed, "though I don't see that you need to worry about looking slim."

"Can you really do that?" Carma inquired eagerly, looking up from a lampshade she was making for her own room.

Carma was plump, and had soft curls in her neck, and Betty had told her frankly she was more kissable than athletic.

"If you wouldn't eat so many chocolates, you wouldn't be interested in *looking* slim," Annette reproved, her mouth full of pins. "You'd *be* slim."

"If you're as clever as Betty says, I can eat chocolates and still look slim," Carma countered lazily. "If it's a gift with you to make people look slim, you should cultivate it," she added reasonably.

"I love to look people over and figure out

what they should wear to look best,—what styles and materials,” Annette confessed.

“ Why don’t you start a dressmaking-school, Annette? ” Norma suggested. “ I’ve heard of them.”

“ Well, I’ll practise on you youngsters first,” Annette replied easily, as if to dismiss the matter.

Norma was more than a trifle disappointed in the answer. It had seemed such a wonderful idea. “ You could just cut and fit, if that’s what you like to do, and charge about a dollar for it,—maybe more.”

Annette laid down her scissors, crossed her arms on her chest, and looked out the window.

“ Napoleon’s considering the strategic advantages of such a move,” Betty giggled, and the others joined in, for Annette unconsciously had struck a Napoleonic pose.

“ I could cut out four a day, anyway, if I could find that many people willing to trust me with their goods,” Annette mused, and thoughtfully resumed her work.

“ You’ll have to call yourself a ‘ modiste,’ ”

Ann," Betty counseled, admiring a neat basting line in her sleeve. "Daphne would like it better. In fact, she might not allow it at all, otherwise," she added in a falsetto voice, which caused even the staid Annette to laugh aloud.

At four o'clock Betty made cocoa, and proudly produced a cake.

"I made this myself, girls—learned how in domestic science! Have some, Carma?"

"Domestic science should be encouraged," Carma approved. "Of course, I'll have a piece, Betty."

"It always makes me hungry to sew,—I suppose because I make hard work of it," Norma declared as she took the piece Betty held out.

When every one was served, Elaine remarked, "If you put the cake away now, Betty, you'll have enough for the Haleys' dinner to-night. Otherwise ——"

"I'm not going to eat two pieces," Carma stated virtuously. "I promised Mother I'd get some things for her. I should be gone by now, but I'm anxious to see what happens to that blue-velvet creation."

Fifteen minutes later Carma had started, but returned almost immediately. "Girls, you'd never forgive me if I let you miss anything. There seems to be a fire down around the corner,—one of the cottages on Sherman Street, I think."

Work was dropped, and the five girls hurried to where the crowd was watching intently. One side of the roof had fallen in.

"Why, it's Joseph's house, isn't it, Ann?" Betty asked. "And all that family made homeless!"

"Are there many of them?" Norma asked in surprise.

"Joseph has five brothers and sisters," Elaine informed her.

There were expressions of sympathy from the crowd.

"It seems to me we could do something besides stand here and say 'Too bad!'" Norma whispered to Betty, who looked thoughtful.

"If every one would give something——" Betty began. "People always have something around that they're just saving. Furniture and clothes for eight people mean something!"

"I can bring a kitchen chair and a pair of pillows," Carma announced. "My grandmother had a weakness for pillows."

"Mother has oodles of things we used in our summer cottage,—mattresses and beds that we brought back when we sold the cottage," Norma added.

"Probably we could leave things at their uncle's fruit store," Carma suggested.

"I can give a lot of towels that aren't good enough for my husband to use in the shop," a barber's wife volunteered. "They're not wore much, but he's fussy, and it's good business," she explained ambiguously.

The girls tried not to smile at the oddly-worded offer. "Ask any one else you know, who will give something," Norma encouraged, knowing that the barber's wife would have a set of acquaintances of her own.

The crowd caught the spirit, overheard others offering contributions, and word went around that donations would be received at the fruit store.

The cottage was soon a charred frame, and Joseph's mother wrung her hands as she

watched it. "I have nutting lef'. Everyt'ing burn," she wailed.

Then an Italian woman, who had been interested in the activity of the crowd, began to explain excitedly in Italian what had been done, and Mrs. Campagna lifted her head slowly and smiled at the good news.

After a wordy conference with the owner of an empty cottage in the row, Mr. Campagna went to report his transaction to his wife.

"When we get insurance on dese house, we buy dat," he informed her, pointing to an empty cottage. "Now we rent, till we getta insurance."

"Then we can send the things right over there," the barber's wife remarked, and again the word passed through the crowd, which was growing enthusiastic over the plan.

"I'll bring mine right away; if I get back before the crowd is gone, others may follow my example before they forget," Carma decided. "If people bring all they said they would, the Campagnas can sleep in their new house to-night."

Without waiting to discuss the matter, the

other four girls hurried to their several homes, to find whatever could be carried.

At the St. Clair home Jimmy was studying when Norma entered and told him briefly what had happened.

“I’ll bring that table down from the attic, so your father can drive over when he comes,” Jimmy offered; “and I’ll carry over some chairs.”

“I know Mother will be glad to get rid of the things, for I’ve often heard her say so,” Norma told him. “I’ll be getting the patched sheets and bedspreads the laundry tried to wreck,” she continued, starting up-stairs to the linen-closet.

“That summer suit I outgrew may as well be handed on to Joseph,” Jimmy decided, tossing it out in the hall.

Five minutes later they started off together, their arms laden. Near the little Italian settlement off Main Street, they found a procession of people carrying their contributions. At the house Mrs. Campagna, with true Italian gratitude, was kissing the hands of her benefactors.



A PROCESSION OF PEOPLE CARRYING THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.
Page 194.

“Because of kin’ frien’s, to-night the Campagnas sleep in their new home,” she cried.

When Norma had taken everything she could without consulting her mother, who was out, she returned to the Haleys, and was urged to stay to dinner. A Haley dinner was always a delight to Norma, who loved the unusualness of a big family, the overflow of conversation, and the many opinions.

“You haven’t eaten from our new china yet,” Betty reminded.

“I’ll telephone Mother later,” Norma agreed, and proceeded to help set the table with the new dishes.

Near dinner-time she called her mother, who had arrived home and had sent additional loads of things to the unfortunate Campagnas,—cooking-utensils and dishes and various things that Norma had not thought of.

At the table the Haleys began as usual by inquiring of one another what had happened during the day.

“Sell any insurance, George?” Ernest wanted to know.

“Saturday’s a bad day,” George returned,

indirectly answering the question. "Everybody's too busy to see me."

"What did you get done on the dresses, Annette?" Daphne queried.

"Betty has hers stitched; of course, there's a lot of finishing. Mine is cut out and basted."

"I think Annette is clever; she ought to have a dressmaking-school," Norma ventured somewhat timidly. It seemed presumptuous to advise a girl so much older.

"Norma says there are dressmaking-schools where the dressmaker cuts and fits and advises, and charges a dollar for a half-day," Annette explained.

"You're too young to try that," Mrs. Haley objected promptly, looking anxiously at Annette. "You haven't the experience. You should have years of experience before trying anything like that."

Daphne's grey eyes enlarged. "Styles change frequently, Mother. The principal thing is to learn the tricks of the prevailing mode—and then keep up with changes," Daphne countered.

"We just bought the house," Mrs. Haley

reminded, "and if Annette gave up her position and then didn't make a success of her dressmaking-school ——" The worried mother of the Haley brood broke off and sighed profoundly.

To Norma's mind came something her mother had told her of Mrs. Haley's girlhood. She had been the daughter of a prosperous farmer, and had been accustomed to plenty all her days, until her father had sold out to invest in some venture which had proved disastrous. Mrs. Haley had not been able to adapt herself to a commercial life, the pinching necessary to raise her family of five had told on her, and she could not understand any aggressive spirit her children might show. Risk to her was synonymous with disaster. When her children made plans that seemed to her full of chance, she became much like a hen that has hatched out ducks which insist on heading for water.

"Annette could make double what she is making," Daphne affirmed. "Don't you remember, Mother, that the only time you ever found a dressmaker who wasn't busy, she

spoiled your dress? A good dressmaker is always busy. Annette has style, and she could come right down to Downs, Cotter, and Field's for a few weeks as fitter, for experience. They're so busy in the alteration department they don't know which way to turn. She could see how things are finished, and what's being worn." Daphne looked appealingly at Annette.

The latter calmly went on with her dinner, and waited the outcome. "When you two have decided what I'm to do, let me know," she suggested. "Really, I'm rather interested to know how the debate comes out."

"It's your chance, Annette," Daphne argued beseechingly. "Besides, there's enough sewing for the four of us, to keep you busy until you establish your school."

"Annette would make a go of it," Ernest pronounced in his usual authoritative tone.

"Well ——" Mrs. Haley hesitated, swayed by the thought of the difficulty of getting dresses made. A person hardly could fail, she could see, with any normal amount of ability. "I suppose we have enough to keep her busy

for quite a while. What do you think, Father?"

"Let her try it. I've plugged at one job, and haven't dared take any chances. I don't want the children to have to do that."

"The Annette School!" Betty exclaimed delightedly. "Your name is just right."

"This dressmaking business doesn't seem very dignified to me," George objected.

"It isn't any different from teaching it in high school—not a bit," Daphne countered.

"Can you leave your office on a week's notice, Annette?" Daphne seldom abbreviated her sister's name. "It's our busy season on dresses at the store. I know they'll be glad to get you."

"You arrange for an interview for me for Monday noon," Annette directed.

A week later Annette was fitting customers in Downs, Cotter, and Field's store—fat, good-natured ones who knew they could not look thin, and fat ones who would not admit they could not be made slim; thin women who wanted severe styles that made them look thinner, and careless women who did not care

how they looked. Some appreciated Annette's honest effort to make their garments becoming; some considered her part of the store machinery. But Annette learned; every figure, every garment, meant a new lesson. To adjust a gown meant to find out how it was put together. To her natural fund of information on the subject, the girl added a hundred details concerning materials, styles, proper fitting, and finishing. Because she had a purpose in view, she was doubly observant of points she might otherwise have overlooked.

When the two weeks for which she had agreed to help out were at an end, Annette went to the head of her department.

"I'm through, Miss Bennett. I just stopped to say good-bye."

"Oh, if you would only stay another week," Miss Bennett urged.

"No. I'm sorry, but I'm anxious to get started for myself. I know I can make a success of it," Annette declared. "People are so helpless, and there are so many needing the service I expect to offer. Wish me luck, Miss Bennett."

“I'll wish you luck, but I'll not need to. Your success is assured,” Miss Bennett affirmed warmly.

For the next week Annette was busy arranging the sitting-room, with its three windows, for a sewing-room. She decided on a bare, painted floor as being easiest to keep free from threads. Cutting-table, sewing-machine, and the work-table for her “pupils” she placed near the windows. As she worked on the dresses for her mother and Daphne, Annette made engagements for the following week.

Mrs. St. Clair made two appointments for the first week, and made a point of mentioning Annette's class at the club affairs where she later wore the dresses. People who at first cautiously made one appointment, made three or four ahead when they saw that the girl really knew what she was doing. Annette had fifteen engagements ahead by the end of the second week, and that meant that more would call up and want something “right away.”

“The Annette School is a success,” she announced at the end of her first real week of work. “Every one is satisfied, and delighted

with the economy, and with what they learn. And I like giving orders better than taking them," she finished happily.

"Daphne's like that, too, only more so," Ernest stated with an innocent air.

"Some people were *intended* for giving orders," Betty flashed back, in defense of her best-beloved sister.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEW YEAR

ON Christmas Eve Daphne burst into the house in the lively manner that Betty usually employed. She was helping, during the rush, to sell at some of the gift-counters, where she knew more about the articles than any one else, and had had more than a little success selling to discriminating people. When she reached home, the family were already seated at dinner.

“Why, Daphne, I thought you’d be dead tired,” Annette exclaimed in surprise, “after to-day’s shopping crowd! You look as fresh as the proverbial daisy.”

“I wouldn’t do it, if I were in your place,” Ernest advised. “It isn’t part of your job. I’d have told them so!”

Daphne gave him a queer look, then glanced at the clock. “I have to be back in forty-five minutes. I’m not sorry I did it; everything is experience, and it pays to be obliging. Mr. Cotter asked me to-day whether I should like to do the buying for the department I’m in.

When I said I'd love it, he remarked that it would make a difference in my check, and that I might plan on going to New York with Miss Cain, right after Christmas, to select our new stock."

"Oh, isn't life a bore?" Betty demanded in affected tones, unable to conceal her pleasure.

"Daphne! So soon? Oh, you've been lucky!" Mrs. Haley cried, as she started to the kitchen.

"It isn't all luck," Mr. Haley protested proudly. "Daphne's studied up on every kind of merchandise that entered the store, whether it was tapestries or alabaster."

"I'm too excited to eat, but I suppose I'd better," Daphne stated, looking at the plate of warm food her mother brought in and set before her. She smiled and added, "I didn't mean to change the subject, of course."

"Last week Annette made twice as much as she made in the office. Ernest, if you and George are going to keep up with the girls, you'll have to step," Betty counseled.

"'Have to step' is slang, Betty," Mrs. Haley corrected mildly.

Ernest frowned at Betty's remark, and George pretended not to hear.

"You used to bring home medals and things," Betty hinted darkly. "You haven't done anything for a long time."

"How long will you be in New York, Daphne?" Mrs. Haley asked, partly because she wanted to know, and partly because she hoped the question would divert Betty from her self-appointed task of teasing her brothers.

"About three or four days," Daphne returned. "And Miss Cain says we'll be entertained a lot, taken out to lunch and dinner and the theater. I wish I had more clothes."

"Take anything of mine you want," Annette offered.

"That doesn't mean your new blue velvet that probably would be much more useful than my evening gown," Daphne amended.

"It means everything. This is no time for haggling," Annette retorted generously, and turned to her mother.

"I notice hardly any one wants to come to class on Saturdays, Mother. I think I'll not make appointments for Saturday, after this.

Then I can help around the house and do our own sewing. I know it makes more work to have people coming into the house in all kinds of weather."

"I'll pay for Annie for another day a week, Mother," Daphne offered. "That will give you more time to get out. It's too much for one woman to wait on six able-bodied people—or any other kind."

"It will help a lot,—and save a lot," Mrs. Haley answered gratefully. "I'll have time to make those new curtains we need so badly; they'll cost about half as much if I buy the material and make them."

With a hasty "Don't know what time I'll get home," Daphne was gone.

As usual on Christmas Day, Norma and Betty exchanged visits, to admire one another's tree and gifts. On this Christmas Norma met Betty at the door.

"Guess who wrote me a letter, Betty," Norma greeted, in accordance with their time-honored custom of imparting news while it was perfectly fresh.

Betty kicked off the soft snow which always

seems to fall on Christmas Day, and pulled off her arctics. "I'll guess the first time—Blue Bell!"

"Oh, did you get one, too?" Norma wanted to know.

"No, but I got a card, and I felt sure you would be favored with a letter. What did she say? What is she doing?"

Norma pulled her friend in. "Come on in, and read it. Sit over here by the fireplace." Betty greeted the rest of the St. Clair family and accepted the letter.

"DEAR NORMA:

"Somehow I know you are responsible for the success I have been having here in Montreal, though I do not know just how you brought it about. Mr. Chorman said you mentioned that I was interested in establishing a gift-shop in Montreal for the winter. He offered to rent space in the lobby of our best hotel here, as gift-shops in hotels in other cities have been very successful. I carry my own basketware, moccasins, pine pillows, and bows and arrows, and also the gift-stock from his store. While I am at school, one of the store clerks is in charge of the shop. When I am at liberty, I have charge. The store pays me for

my time, and I make a profit on my own goods.

"It has been a wonderful success,—both for the store and for me,—as Christmas buying for the last month has been heavy, and traveling people take home many gifts when it is so convenient to purchase them.

"My circulating library is a big success in the hotel, where people read—are simply desperate for reading-matter!

"If you could know how much all this means to me, I could thank you. My father is quite helpless, and this income seems to be a permanent arrangement, with perhaps some change for summer months.

"School life is doubly enjoyable when I have no financial worries. I play basketball, and as yet our team is undefeated. Tell Betty Haley I challenge her to another race, if we meet at the lake this summer.

"To your parents and foster-brother please convey my regards, and to yourself let me express my deepest gratitude and love.

"Faithfully,

"BLUE BELL."

"Isn't that just like her—only more talkative!" Betty cried delightedly. "Precise and sincere. More careful of her English than I am," she sighed. "Of course Daphne and Mother keep at me. It isn't their fault."

“Did Santa Claus bring you everything you wanted?” Mrs. St. Clair asked.

“Every sensible thing I wanted,” Betty conceded. “That’s the worst of growing up,—gifts get so sensible. But Mother says it was the nicest Christmas we ever had, and I guess it was. I saved the *news*, Norma. It’s about Daphne. She starts for New York day after to-morrow, to do part of the buying—all her expenses paid. Isn’t it *wonderful*? George says she probably will come home with an accent, in which case he’ll leave home, never to return until she has married and left! George and Ernest are both the least bit jealous, especially since Annette is making twice as much as she did in the office. She says she wondered she ever left the decision to Daphne and Mother. Remember, Norma, how she *hesitated*? Life is funny!” Betty paused. “Jimmy Rogers, are you laughing *at* me or *with* me?” she demanded threateningly.

“*With* you, of course; it’s the only safe thing to do,” Jimmy replied promptly, holding up a book for a shield, to ward off any attack Betty might make.

"I may talk a lot, but only when I have a lot to tell," Betty stated in her most dignified tone. "Besides, with all the competition I have at home, I never get caught up, and Mother won't let any one of us interrupt another."

"That's a distinct hardship," Jimmy sympathized, "though it may be practical in a small family."

Betty decided to overlook whatever Jimmy was implying, and let him take her home.

A week later Daphne returned from her trip, and was met by Norma and Betty.

"Hello, Daphne! How do you do, Miss Cain?" Betty greeted, kissing Daphne rapturously.

"I could hardly get her home, Betty, but here she is," Miss Cain announced.

"Check your suitcase, Daphne. George will get it later; he's coming this way," Betty explained. "Now tell me everything. Was it as nice as you expected?" she wanted to know.

Before replying, Daphne said good-bye to Miss Cain, who was starting for her street-car.

"Nicer, Betty. I saw gorgeous things, and

I learned a lot. I had to choose things priced low enough for Newbury, but I could look at the rest all I liked. I can see why Miss Cain is buyer; she looks at articles both ways—from the store's viewpoint and from the prospective customer's. It is what Newbury will buy that we must buy," Daphne summed up.

"Wait," Betty exclaimed, when they had reached Second Street. "Mother wanted me to get fruit for breakfast. We'll stop at Campagna's."

They entered the shabby little shop. Inside, Joseph came forward shyly.

"Working here during your vacation, Joseph?" Betty asked.

"All the time, now," Joseph answered. "I ain't going to school no more. I don't like it. I'm sixteen; I can quit. My uncle's thinkin' of startin' another store, near the market, and I'm goin'a wait on this one."

"But Joseph, if you're going to be an artist, you must go to school," Daphne remonstrated. "You aren't going to give up your drawing-lessons, are you? Norma and Betty are always telling me how good your work is."

Joseph looked gratefully at the two girls, turned to the window, and was silent. "All my stuff burned," he explained briefly.

"Oh!" Daphne put a good deal of understanding in the small word, for she knew that meant all his finished work, as well as his equipment. It had happened, too, just when he was discouraged about his high-school work.

"But didn't you take drawing in high school?" she pursued.

"They won't let you take it in first year. You gotta take Latin and stuff," he reminded rebelliously.

"I'll bring you down one of my books on art. I have a wonderful set my uncle bought me. You can study it, and you'll love it, Joseph. Don't give up your painting altogether, even if you do leave school."

Joseph twisted an unoffending apple around by its stem and said nothing.

Betty bought grapefruit and the girls left.

"Isn't that too bad?" Daphne queried when they were outside. "I'll bring him that first book of my set, to-night. It's simple, full of illustrations and things to copy, and tells the

beginner how to decide what line of work he should do."

They had reached the Haley house. "I'll wait here, if Daphne is coming right back anyway. I have to go home at once," Norma explained.

"All right," Betty agreed, "but I wish you could come in for a while."

"I'll be out in a minute," Daphne promised, and ran up the steps.

When the three reached the fruit store again, Mrs. Campagna was there, a small, bow-legged girl clinging to her skirts and eating a banana.

"I brought the book, Joseph." Daphne opened it at random and laid it on the counter where wrapping was done. "See? This chapter is on 'Originality.' This plain pine-tree on level ground is merely pretty; the one on the rocky peak of the mountain stirs your imagination. You know it has struggled on little soil. It is undersized and never will grow much larger. It makes people *feel*, is more likely to sell than the other." Daphne turned the page. "Which dog do you like, Joseph—the one just

sitting, or the same dog tied where he can't reach his bone? ”

“ The one that can't reach the bone,” Joe returned promptly.

“ Every one would,” Daphne agreed, “ and it is twenty times as likely to sell. Just go through this book, and when you've finished it, bring it back and I'll let you have another, if you're interested.”

“ Thanks, I know I'll like it,” Joe mumbled shyly.

“ If you like it, draw me a picture that shows what you learned,” Daphne commanded.

“ We don' wann Joe be artist. Artist no getta money,” Mrs. Campagna objected at this point. “ Dey painta picture; nobody buy.”

Picking up a newspaper, Daphne turned to a full-page advertisement. “ Somebody draws these pictures every day and gets paid. The card here that you display with your fruit gave some artist work, and the calendars on your wall, and cartoons, and programs. Somebody makes money on all these things. Miss Jamesson says Joseph has exceptional talent, and Miss Kane considered him one of her most

promising pupils. I'll help him, if he'll bring his drawings to me."

In her amiable Italian fashion, Mrs. Campagna smiled, but Daphne was not deceived. Joseph would receive no encouragement at home, to be anything that remotely resembled an artist.

When Norma reached home, she repeated what she had heard.

"Mother, Joe's given up school, because his brushes and things were all burned, and he hasn't been doing anything with his painting. Isn't that a shame? Daphne got after him, and made a special trip to give him a book to study."

"I'll buy him another painting outfit, Norma. Tell Daphne to pick out what he needs and charge it to me," Mr. St. Clair ordered briefly. "I feel that I owe Joseph a little something."

"Oh, Dad! That's fine. I'll call her up. No! She just got home from New York, and will have a lot to tell. I'll wait until to-morrow and tell Betty," Norma decided.

"It might make all the difference in the

world in what he does, if he gets the right help just now," Mrs. St. Clair remarked musingly.

Norma glanced at Jimmy, who was busy with his mechanical drawing on a small table. There was an odd look in his eyes; it seemed to Norma he was wondering where he would be, and what he would be doing, if the St. Clairs had not taken him into their home. He would be working, and boarding with strangers at Christmas time, instead of living as a member of the St. Clair family, and attending a school where he had become very popular in a few months. He had been made captain of the basketball team, which thought reminded Norma of something.

"Jimmy, Betty's going to play center in Monday's game. Are you going?"

"I wouldn't think of missing it. Ordinarily, girls' basketball is a little slow, but if Betty's in it, the game will be lively," Jimmy declared.

On the first school day of the new year Norma returned to her classes, to find each one reduced in numbers. When Elaine and Norma entered English class, Andrew Cole was handing Miss Hendricks his books.

“Never any more schooling, Mr. Cole?” Miss Hendricks was saying. “You’ll have to compete with thousands of men who have finished high school and college,” she warned.

Andrew stood stupidly, as Norma had learned he always stood before answering. He was good-looking until called upon for a reply, when he always appeared at a disadvantage. “I can’t learn. I’d rather work. I got forty-eight in Latin,” he argued eloquently.

Even Miss Hendricks, S.A.K.A., found no answer to this, for Andrew’s English work, too, was wretched. She marked off her record. “Think it over, Andrew. You won’t get far if you don’t study.”

But Andrew hurried out, as if glad to escape.

In each class there were four or five vacancies, and friends reported that Clara Haynes and Henry Phillips and Carl Kurz would not be back.

At noon Norma spoke of it to Betty, who replied: “More than that will drop out in June. They’d rather work than study; it’s easier for them.”

CHAPTER XV

BETTY'S GAME

“THREE more hours and the Daytona High will get walloped,” Betty exulted on Monday noon.

By the middle of the afternoon the gymnasium was filled with the excited followers of two teams. “Oh, Norma,” Betty whispered, “if I could only tell, by looking at them, what kind of players they are,—but I can’t!”

“Neither can they tell by looking at your team, Betty. It’s the first real game we’ve ever seen you play, isn’t it, Elaine? You’ll simply *have* to win.”

Betty was actually shivering with excitement. “We have some good forwards, anyway.”

“And a good center,” Jimmy conceded.

“The forwards are the ones who throw for the basket and make the score, aren’t they?” Elaine queried, trying to get the principal points of the game straight before the players started.

“If they get the right kind of backing, they throw for the basket,” Jimmy amended.

The whistle sounded, and ten excited girls took their places in the spaces marked off by the white painted lines.

In the center, facing her opponent, who was a little shorter, Betty stood waiting for the tossing-up of the ball by the referee. Again the whistle sounded and the referee tossed the ball up between them. They jumped, each endeavoring to knock it toward her own forwards; Betty was successful, as she was not only taller, but quicker.

Ada James, for Newbury, caught the ball and tried for the basket, but was closely guarded by the Daytona player, and was obliged to throw for the basket at an awkward angle. She missed, and the Daytona guard, whose business it was to block every move of Ada, her opponent, caught the ball and threw it the length of the court to her own forward, who tried for the basket and made it.

As the score-keeper chalked up two points for Daytona, the friends of the latter cheered. Newbury tried to look as if it did not matter.

Again the ball was thrown up in the center, and again Betty proved quicker, striking the ball over to Mildred Heath, who tried to throw for the basket, but was balked by the Daytona guard, was obliged to "dribble" it, or bounce it three times, as holding the ball is not allowed, and saw it grabbed by the guard, who again threw it the length of the court. Something about these long throws nonplussed the Newbury players, who were accustomed to see the ball thrown to the center and then passed on to the forward; furthermore, a ball thrown so far is thrown swiftly, and the eye cannot follow it so well. The Daytona team knew exactly what it was about, Betty saw that. Before the Newbury guard knew the Daytona forward had the ball, the latter had thrown another basket.

"Four to nothing!" Newbury was uneasy.

There was little variation in the playing for the rest of the first half. Newbury guards worked nobly, and managed to keep Daytona from scoring more than once, but that meant six to nothing in favor of the visiting team!

When the first half of the game was

“called,” Newbury was quiet. There is so little to be said when the home team is losing. The Daytona players grouped in a corner and gave their cheer. It looked like what the boys called “a slaughter.”

The self-confident Betty avoided her friends, as she left the court. There are some griefs that must be borne alone; to Betty, this was one of them. It wasn't just losing that hurt her; Betty was a good sport. It was the knowledge that her team was hopelessly outclassed. Norma watched her pityingly, and could think of no word of comfort, but Jimmy had an idea.

“Norma, tell Betty to come over here a minute, away from the Daytona players, will you? I want to tell her something.” Jimmy was a trifle mysterious, not to say important.

Betty came, looking a little sheepish. “I suppose you're going to taunt me for bragging too soon,” she began.

“There's no time for that,” Jimmy returned in a business-like way. “Listen, Betty. You'll have to reorganize. Their center is

their weak point. Play against it. Their guards are good—better than our forwards. You've got to play this game alone. What they did three times in the first half of the game, they'll do three times in the second half, if you let them. Their center is about a minute late, no matter what happens!

“Now!” Jimmy seemed to take a fresh start. “Notice how they throw the ball the length of the court, rather than depend on her? You've got to counteract that. Keep the ball in the center—where they *don't* want it, for the best of reasons. You, Betty, will have to make any baskets that are made for Newbury. Tell your guards and forwards to keep the ball in *your hands*, and in the center of the court. The Daytona players can't cross the lines. That means you have no opponent but that center, who isn't up to your speed. You can shoot baskets from the center of the court; I've seen you do it dozens of times. Now, Betty, you play the game alone.”

Betty's face was shining for an instant. She *knew* she could do it. Suddenly her smile faded. “Wouldn't I look nice telling our

coach to let me play the game alone?" she demanded helplessly.

"I'll tell them. Call them over, Norma. We've just two minutes to arrange it," he announced, glancing at the clock.

Norma carried the message to coach and players, who gathered in an eager knot around Jimmy, who, as captain of the boys' team, ought to know something about strategy in basketball. Jimmy talked fast and convincingly, and his words carried weight, for his own team was as yet undefeated.

"Do just that!" Miss Quiller commanded. "Mr. Rogers is right. Keep the ball in Miss Haley's hands!"

Scarcely had she finished the last word, when the whistle sounded for the second half. The girls fell into place, and Miss Quiller, as referee for the second half, tossed the ball up. Betty struck it toward her goal, and Mildred Heath caught it, returning it to Betty, who had time to jump free of her opponent. Before the bewildered center could see what was happening, Betty had aimed carefully and made the first score for Newbury.

The cheer that went up showed that Newbury had taken heart.

“If only they don't see what we're doing before we get a score piled up,” Betty breathed to herself. She glanced at Jimmy, who nodded approvingly.

The second time the ball was thrown up, the Daytona center managed to strike it toward her own side, but the alert forward passed it to her team-mate, who was in better position. The latter missed, and the Newbury guard threw it back to Betty, who again took aim and scored. She thought gratefully of her hours of practice in the barn.

“Daytona—6; Newbury—4,” the score-keeper chalked up.

Newbury players were beginning to consider every move in the light of what Jimmy had said. They did everything except what Daytona expected them to do. Once when Betty's opponent guarded her, she was obliged to throw to her forward, who missed it, but Betty was ready for the long throw the Daytona players could be counted on to make, and stopped it half-way down the court. As the

Daytona center started toward her, she aimed, and for the third time made a basket.

“ 6—6,” the score read.

There was one minute to play, when a Daytona player stepped over the line, and a foul was called, thus allowing the Newbury forward to stand on the line, take her time, and, unguarded, aim for the basket. Mildred Heath, excited by the knowledge that everything depended on this play, missed. Newbury groaned. It had been *such* a chance!

A half-minute left! A Daytona guard got the ball, tried her usual long throw, but too hastily, and it went outside the line, and must be thrown in by one of the opposing side. A second chance, if Betty got it! This time Ada James was allowed to throw. There was not a sound in the room when she tossed the ball to Betty, who threw neatly over the rim of the basket. It dropped through just before the whistle sounded, and cheers broke loose. Two points for a ball out!

“ 8—6 in favor of Newbury! ”

They carried Betty off the court, where Mr. Gray, the excitable chemistry teacher, who in-

variably hopped around during a game, was waiting to congratulate her.

Then a "spread" followed, with much talk, and the Daytona players proved themselves as good sports as players. They realized that they had been outgeneraled.

When the visitors left, Miss Quiller called the girls about her, for the talk which a coach always seems to give after a game. The athletic reporter of the Newbury "Star" lingered near, notebook in hand.

"Girls, I want to commend *all* of you, not just the girl who made four baskets," Miss Quiller emphasized. "I've coached girls' teams for ten years, and I never saw better team-spirit than you displayed to-day. I know the feeling a forward has when she holds the ball in her two hands and sees the basket over her head. It's just human nature to want to throw it in. It's just human nature to want personal glory. A dozen times I saw Miss Heath and Miss James look longingly at the basket, then throw it to Miss Haley. You forwards could not have made the baskets. You were too heavily guarded. The Daytona



THEY CARRIED BETTY OFF THE COURT. —Page 225.

guards have played for three years. We played our strong point against their weak one—and *team-work* won. Isn't that right, Miss Haley?" the coach asked, knowing the generous Betty would agree.

"Absolutely," Betty responded warmly. "It makes me feel guilty when people congratulate me for having made *four* baskets. I stood in the center of the court, practically unguarded, and either Miss James or Miss Heath could have done what I did, against such a weak opponent as the Daytona center. Team-work is the only explanation. If we figure every game out as Mr. Rogers did this one, we have a big season ahead of us, girls," she finished enthusiastically.

"I saw every player trying to figure where Miss Haley wanted the ball, and getting it to her," Miss Quiller informed them.

"By the time they figured out what we were doing, it was too late for them to win the game," Connie Mason contributed. "We were really lucky to lose the first half. If we had happened to win it, or to break even, we wouldn't have had time to plan the second half

—and win.” Connie was the delighted captain of the Newbury players.

“Team-work wins,” the reporter interrupted. “I’ll put it all in,—but Miss Haley certainly threw a long, strong, sure basket!”

On their way home Norma was exultant. “I’ll send a paper to Blue Bell,” she announced.

Jimmy, who had hung around, putting in time until the girls started home, joined them. “Betty, what were all those fellows saying?” he inquired curiously. “It didn’t seem as if it would take them so long to congratulate you on your playing.”

Sing-song fashion, Norma announced, “I heard one of them ask her if he could take her to the Junior dance.”

“Come on, Betty;” Elaine cajoled, “’fess up. How many invitations did you get?”

Betty blushed and looked away. “Five,” she admitted, not without some pleasure.

“Oh, Popularity thy name is Betty!” Jimmy chanted. “Team-work is all right in its place, but a fellow doesn’t ask a whole team to a dance,” he concluded reasonably.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HALEYS, INCORPORATED

SPRING took its time about coming, but, as the practical Daphne said, it was a good thing, since the house wasn't ready to sell. Ernest and George occasionally repaired things inside the house, but it seemed too early to begin on the yard and outside improvements. Besides, the boys had taken to studying, since Daphne and Annette had set an example not to be overlooked, and Betty had taunted her brothers whenever she thought of it, which was often.

One evening after dinner, as the family sat in the living-room, Mr. Haley laid down his paper. Everything was quiet, until the rustle of the paper, as it dropped, made Mrs. Haley look up to see her husband rubbing his forehead and eyes. "Tired, Walter?" she asked sympathetically.

"It's my eyes, I guess," he returned, without looking at her.

"I wish you could give up bookkeeping.

Maybe you should have stronger glasses," Mrs. Haley suggested hopefully.

"These are as strong as I can get, so Dr. Carrington told me the last time he fitted me," Mr. Haley admitted quietly. "I'm afraid I'll have to find something else to do, and it isn't easy for a man of my age to 'find something else.'"

"You're only fifty," his wife countered.

"And, for some reason, a man of fifty is considered old," he remarked. "I've hung to this job just as long as I can. I've seen it coming, but didn't like to say anything."

Mrs. Haley wiped away tears she could not hold back.

"Now, now, Mother, don't cry. I wouldn't have mentioned it, if I hadn't felt you must know it soon," Mr. Haley comforted.

"With four of us working, Mother, we aren't going to starve," George reminded.

"But we've got this house on our hands," Mrs. Haley remarked tremulously.

"We'll not have it much longer," Daphne put in. "We're going to sell it as soon as it is beyond reproach so far as repairs go; and

Uncle Herbert promised us twice as much as we make. Don't forget that!"

"Why, Dad! You could do the painting yourself. Take some time off and rest your eyes, anyway," Ernest urged. "It would pay you."

"Count the profit your year's salary, Dad," George counseled. "T. C. Thompson does nothing else but buy up houses, repair them, and sell them. People don't see what a house can be like unless it's shining with new paint and varnish. Their lack of vision is lining his pockets. You could do what he's doing; your judgment is as good as his any day."

"I'd kind of like it, too," Mr. Haley replied, trying to be enthusiastic, they could see, for their mother's sake.

"You'd better give notice right away, and start on this place, Father," George urged. "The better it looks, the better price you'll get, and the earlier it's ready, the more time you have to sell it."

Betty, watching the others do the planning, felt rather out of it all. "I'm not earning a thing," she thought.

"It seems like taking an awful chance," Mr. Haley sighed.

"Dad, you got that idea when we were small,—and Mother, too," Daphne warned. "Five of us to feed meant so much responsibility that you don't realize we're all old enough to take care of ourselves. You've both fallen into the habit of worrying."

"Yes," Betty chimed in. "Remember that Mr. Burd with the seventeen children? He drank and his wife washed. Then, after a lot of the older children grew up and started to work, and there was so much money coming in they didn't know what to do with it, they built that big house, and Mr. Burd was so proud he gave up drinking and went to work," Betty recounted solemnly. "I bet he drank because he was worried."

The Haley family laughed helplessly at the comparison, and Betty stopped and pouted.

"Betty!" This came severely from Ernest, as one who spoke for the head of the family. "You aren't comparing Father to that drunken Mr. Burd?"

"He *stopped* drinking," Betty insisted.

“Well, Father’s going to stop *working*,—just when Mr. Burd began,” Daphne reminded. “It’s a contrast, dear, not a comparison.”

But for once Betty was too serious to see anything funny in the conversation. “You don’t see what I mean ——” she began.

“What’s that noise?” George asked. “Some one knocking?”

They listened, and a timid knock sounded. Betty skipped to the door, glad to escape the persecution of her family.

“Oh, it’s you, Joseph! Come right in. Couldn’t you find the bell, or is it out of order? We didn’t hear it.”

Joseph, tugging at his cap, stepped into the hall.

“I brought your sister’s book—and ——” He held something else, wrapped flat in a newspaper.

“Daphne!” Betty called, seeing that Joseph was too embarrassed to face the family.

Daphne’s graceful form appeared in the doorway leading from the living-room, just as Joseph looked up doubtfully from the picture

he had unwrapped. As the older girl took it, Betty looked over her shoulder, though she had been taught not to do so.

"Oh, Joseph!" There was approval in Betty's voice.

"Joseph! You've got *feeling*," Daphne pronounced. "Let me show it to the family. Come on in for a minute. They will all want to see it and admire it."

Joseph edged slowly, until he was just inside the door, and, at Mrs. Haley's cordial invitation, slid shyly into the nearest seat.

So they could all see at once, Daphne held up the picture at a little distance from them. It showed an old ragged woman, bent with age and hard work, peering into a window of gay scarfs and gloves and parasols,—things she never could hope to own, things that had no part in her drab life.

"What made you do it, Joseph?" Daphne asked sharply.

At the brisk note in her question, Joseph looked up in surprise. "I saw a old lady—all rags—lookin' at nice things," he explained simply.

“It was a good choice of subject, Joseph. There’s art in you; it’s human—the sort of picture a person doesn’t forget. I’m proud of you, and I don’t need to ask whether you liked the book, for I can see you’ve profited by it. Shall I get you another?”

For answer Joseph nodded, but seemed unable to express himself farther, and Daphne started for her room.

She returned with the second volume of the set, and handed it to Joseph, who rose with evident relief. Daphne reached for his picture, which was propped against a lamp on the table.

“The latter part of June there’s going to be an exhibit of local work. You take this home and work on it, Joseph. Make the old woman’s black shawl a little bit green,—you know how black fades out when it’s old,—and show her shadow on the gay things. You have a shadow, but I’d emphasize it a little. It’s pathetic; and when you make people *feel*, you’re an artist. And Joseph!” She had followed him to the door. “Promise me you won’t give up, will you? Work on this, and when you don’t know

how to improve on it, bring it to me, and I'll show it to Grace Kane, and tell you what she says. You may sell it at the exhibit. You won't get a fortune for it, but you may sell it.

"By the way, did you like the things Mr. St. Clair had me send you?"

Joseph nodded. "Yes—but I didn't know where they come from."

"Promise me you won't give up your painting, Joseph," Daphne demanded.

"I'll stick to it," the boy mumbled, looking up as if half afraid.

When Daphne had closed the door behind him, she noticed Ernest's amused expression as he carelessly turned the page of a book on accounting.

"I tell you, a good stiff lecture like that once in a while will do him good," Ernest brought out, as if he had long wanted to see Joseph punished for some persistent sin.

Daphne stopped abruptly. "Was I unkind?" she queried in surprise, and with more than a hint of remorse in her tone.

"He understood you, all right, Daphne," Betty interposed. "You were so solemn he

must have been terribly impressed by what he'd done. I think he was as much flattered as frightened. You kind of pounced on him," she finished honestly.

"You make everything so clear, Betty," George pronounced approvingly. "You're positively pellucid!"

"What does that mean?" Betty demanded suspiciously.

"Go and look it up," George ordered sternly.

"And let George know when you find out. I think he took a shot in the dark," Ernest opined pleasantly, after the way of brothers.

Betty made a dive for the dictionary, so that she might clear herself of any false charges her brother might have implied. It was a rule in the Haley house to "look it up if you don't know." Once Betty had protested against the bother, and Ernest had offered her a penny for every word she looked up, whereupon George had taken a fiendish delight in airing his vocabulary, thus emptying Ernest's pockets and driving Betty to distraction trying to keep up with the profitable game.

George's mind had gone back to the original

discussion. "Dad," he began suddenly, as if an idea had struck him, "why not get a two or three months' leave of absence? Then if you want to go back, you have a loophole; you've been with the firm so long they should be willing to make some concession."

"Yes, try it, Walter," Mrs. Haley assented eagerly. "That's a good idea; at least it will give your eyes a rest."

"I can be on the lookout for another house that has possibilities," George continued. "I get around a good deal, so I'll find the place. Daphne will give the orders as to what shall be done with it, and Father will merely carry them out. We'll *all* furnish the money," George summed up, pleased with his scheme.

The following evening Mr. Haley came home in high spirits.

"It's all right, Mother," he greeted cheerfully. "I can take a few months off. That will give me time to think. I know I can fix this house so you'd never recognize it." He paused as another pleasant thought occurred to him. "Nice the way the children all want to help, isn't it, Mother?"

“Yes, Walter. I noticed, and I guess we don’t need to worry so much with four of them working,” Mrs. Haley returned, as she bustled about, putting food on the table.

The moment Daphne entered, Mr. Haley began to plan for what he called his “working vacation.” The others were already there.

“Now, Daphne,” her father began, “if you’ll just tell me what kind of paint you intend having on the house ——”

Daphne smiled at the thrust. As Betty said, it was no fun trying to tease her; she simply didn’t “tease”; the boys were better subjects for that. “That shiny brown, Dad,—and absolutely *no* trimming. Be sure it’s that chocolaty brown,” she admonished.

“I’m tired of brown. This house has looked like dry mud ever since I can remember,” Betty objected.

“Betty!” George rebuked with mock severity. “This is nothing short of insubordination. Didn’t you hear Daphne specify ‘*brown*’—‘shiny chocolaty brown’?” he asked in astonishment.

“Oh, you’d think I was a Mexican general,”

Daphne protested. "Mother, *am* I bossy?" she implored, looking anxiously at her mother.

"Well, you have very definite ideas. I guess that's what George means," Mrs. Haley evaded neatly, for she never would be drawn into the children's discussions.

"Where do they get that particular shiny brown?" Daphne went on, as if there had been no interruption.

"They put varnish in the paint," Mr. Haley informed her promptly. "It *is* a good effect, Daphne,—if the rest don't vote us down."

But the Haleys put their blind faith in Daphne's dictum, and in two weeks were rewarded. The house rose up taller—it actually seemed to—from the new green lawn that Ernest's foresight had produced. The shiny dark brown—"absolutely no trimming"—made the house look larger on its wide lot. Daphne had ordered oyster-white shades, which, together with the new curtains her mother had provided, stood out as chastely as the girl had predicted they would. The house was at once subdued and shining and sure of itself.

Around the outside the family strolled, when it was completed, surveying it from various angles. Norma, who had been brought by Betty to admire it, declared she would not have known it.

"It looks twenty years younger," Mrs. Haley marvelled.

"Won't you hate to sell it, Betty?" Norma asked curiously.

"Oh, yes," Betty hesitated, and added honestly, "but I'd like the excitement of moving and wondering where we were going next."

With an abundance of leisure on his hands, Mr. Haley tackled the inside of the house, and results, as to walls, woodwork, and floors, were surprising. The scuffy stair shed its strip of carpet, Mr. Haley had varnished it, and Daphne had sent out rubber treads for it.

By the time the bridal wreath and flowering currant, that hid the foundation in front, were in bloom, the house was sold to a fussy-looking woman with a poodle, which she carried about wherever she went.

"Everything is in such good condition," she approved. "Yes, if I can have it by the first

of June, I guess the price is right," and she went off, leaving the Haleys to make new plans.

"Two thousand dollars profit!" Mr. Haley gloated.

"Times two, 'cause Uncle Herbert said he'd double it," Betty reminded, though she did not need to.

"Where do we go from here?" Ernest inquired slangily.

"Not where it will injure my business," Annette interposed.

"I've been wondering about that flat on Chestnut Street," George began.

"But George, it's jammed right up against Cleghorn's place, and then that little old house where Mrs. Caldwell lives is the other side of Cleghorn's," Mrs. Haley protested.

"Exactly, Mother," George returned, "and that's why we can make a profit. I don't suppose Cleghorn is any better pleased with the dark rooms he must have, than we should be. If he'll buy the Caldwell lot and then move the shack off, he could move his house over about fifteen feet—maybe more—and we

could buy an extra fifteen feet to lessen his expense—and widen our lot. It would cost him something, but it would be worth more than it costs in the value of the place alone, to say nothing of the pleasure to him.”

“But we don’t want flats,” Mrs. Haley declared.

“Yes, we do, Mother,” Annette broke in. “We needn’t rent the upper. We would live in the whole house, and I could have my business up-stairs in the front, where there’s plenty of light. That would mean plenty of bedrooms and closet-space—things we need badly. If my work is up-stairs, people needn’t come through your house at all, but go right up the stairs of the upper flat.”

Mrs. Haley considered all this.

“Then if we wanted to move, we might keep the flats and rent them, instead of selling,” she remarked thoughtfully.

“And if George and I go to the State University this fall, you won’t want so much room,” Ernest put in.

“Are you planning to go, Ernest?” Daphne questioned hopefully.

“Yes. There ought to be enough money to start another house going, and keep us in college a year, with what we’ve saved,” Ernest replied. “We can help Dad put another place in shape. I hope this Cleghorn sees the idea as we do; everything depends on that.”

“You want to urge him, Dad. *Make* him see it. It’s to his advantage,” George advised.

“You leave Cleghorn to me,” Mr. Haley replied slowly. “You young people, with your modern ideas, forget a few things. People don’t like to have an idea pushed at them; they like to do some of their own thinking. I’ll sketch the idea to Mr. Cleghorn and ask his opinion; tell him to think it over and let me know. By the next morning he’ll think the whole plan was his own,—and I won’t set him right.”

“I didn’t know you were so subtle, Father,” Mrs. Haley remarked dryly.

“I’ve watched the officers of the company argue about things, and I notice that the man who lets the other fellow do some of the thinking usually has his way in the end,” Mr. Haley explained. “Maybe my business education

isn't all wasted, even if I didn't get to be anything but a bookkeeper," he sighed.

Whether it was Mr. Haley's tact and diplomacy, or merely self-interest on Mr. Cleghorn's part, he saw the advantage of a wider lot and consequently lighter rooms.

Reluctantly the Haleys moved from the comfort of the place they had fixed up, to the partly darkened flat on Chestnut Street. It was a good building, solid brick with "no nonsense about it," as George said, but two of the rooms were undeniably dark. Even Daphne had to conceal her disappointment by talking briskly about minor improvements. Annette was delighted. There was plenty of light in the big bay window up-stairs in the front, and her customers came up the stairs which belonged to the flat, instead of "tracking through" her mother's rooms, as before.

On the day the Caldwell cottage, two houses down, was moved away, and the work of putting additional foundation beside the Cleghorn house begun, the Haleys watched with intense interest. It had seemed as if delays of one kind and another would continue indefinitely;

three families had to be satisfied with the terms, and two contractors obtained during the busy season. A load lifted from their minds when the little dark house was finally hauled ignominiously down the street. Another delay, and the contractor who was to put in the new foundation for Cleghorn's house began his work. Eventually work was started on the shifting of the house to its new foundation.

It was only a few weeks since they had moved in, but it seemed like months before the Cleghorn house was moved over fifteen feet farther from the Haleys' new home. The workmen finished at night, just as dusk was falling, but when morning came, the Haleys wandered from room to room, rejoicing at the better view and the light rooms, and made plans for a rose-garden between the houses as soon as the deed to the extra fifteen feet should be secured, and the old cellar filled in and leveled.

Meantime school was about to close, and Betty murmured regretfully about her lost gymnasium.

"If I only had my gymnasium. I want to

earn some money, too; everybody else in the family does. Daphne, do you suppose I could get in your store? Still," without waiting for a reply, "that isn't outdoors. I like being outdoors."

As Betty was leaving the last gymnasium session of the school year, Miss Burdick settled her problem by calling Betty to her.

"Miss Haley, didn't you say something about having a successful gymnasium of your own last summer?" Her dark eyes twinkled, for Betty had given her a very enthusiastic and vivid account of it.

"Yes, but I have no place for it this year," Betty replied mournfully.

"That's good," Miss Burdick returned coolly.

"Good?" Betty gasped. "But ——"

"I've talked school playgrounds for summer-time until the board has actually consented to 'try it.' I recommended you for the Fourth Street school. Would you like it?"

"Oh, you darling, you *knew* I would!" Betty squealed.

Miss Burdick laughed at Betty's unbridled

enthusiasm. "There may be some rough boys, though they're only allowed in if they are twelve years or under."

"I can manage them," Betty laughed, and hurried home as fast as her new dignity would allow.

"Mother," she called out, and, without waiting for her mother to reach the hall to see what calamity had befallen, she made her announcement. "I'm a teacher," she began impressively.

"Teacher of what?" Mrs. Haley inquired, with only mild interest.

"Gymnasium, of course," Betty replied in the tone that seemed to question the fact that there was anything else a person could or would teach.

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Haley pursued with more interest, and some amusement.

"I'm in charge of Fourth Street school summer playground. I've been helping Miss Burdick all year with freshman gym, and she bulldozed the school board into appointing me."

"Don't say 'bulldoze,' Betty. A teacher wouldn't, you know," her mother scored neatly.

“I wish everybody’d hurry home, so I could tell them the news. I’ll help you now, Mother, and then I can go and meet Daphne.”

Glancing thoughtfully in the mirror of the buffet, and holding back her coarse, taffy-colored locks, Betty studied the effect of a more dignified headdress. “I wish I hadn’t had my hair bobbed!” she decided aloud, frowning at her youthful image.

Mrs. Haley laughed as she watched her youngest daughter, who suddenly opened the buffet drawer and lifted out a table-cloth. It occurred to her that Betty extracted the last shred of enjoyment from any situation, that she dramatized every small happening into an important event. That was what it meant to be young and strong and full of the joy of living.

“I’ll set the table now, even if it is a little early. And, Mother, don’t forget I’ll have a salary—twelve dollars a week! Isn’t that a lot, when the work is nothing but play? Well, there’s just that much less for you to worry about. In fact, I don’t see that you need worry at all, any more,” she stated with finality,

as she snapped the table-cloth on in her own brisk way.

Already Betty felt that she was carrying a large share of the family's financial burden, and, like any one else who is doing the work he really loves, she would not have changed places with the President, or any one else. To Betty there were two classes of people in the world: those who had charge of playgrounds, at twelve dollars a week; and those who held other jobs, at enormous salaries sometimes. The latter class were to be pitied.

CHAPTER XVII

SOMETHING LONG AND GREEN

WHEN the great day for the art exhibit arrived, Joseph hung about Newbury Hall in his apologetic way, as if he were not entitled to space anywhere on earth, let alone on the particular spot where artists displayed their work. He roamed about, enjoying the paintings and drawings, trying to judge them by the knowledge his teacher and Daphne had put in his hands.

“Too many bowls and vases of flowers,” he thought. Those sunflowers with the broken wooden fence back of them, and the pump with the rusty cup at one side, made a better picture. It made you think of things,—summer days in the country, and little white houses, and the funny noise grasshoppers made.

There was a woman who was too long-waisted; the second book Daphne had loaned him said women were shorter-waisted than men, as a rule. Joseph was careful about his

drawing, to get things the right proportion, and Miss Kane called his work good. When he thought of that, the sun seemed to shine brighter. He was learning; already things he had read were taking shape in his mind, so that he could criticize a picture by the standard he had formed. He went over them now, choosing a good subject that had not been done to death, and that would make people "feel" and sympathize,—but not too gloomy; watching proportion and perspective, then color; keeping the principal object in the picture a little to the right of the center.

A woman passed in front of Joseph and stopped before his picture, then beckoned to her husband. "Look, Wilbur. Isn't this touching?" she asked.

"H'm—amateurish, but a good subject," the man replied. "If it were better done, I should like to own it."

Joseph wondered if they could hear his heart beating. His work received praise and blame, too. He wished the man would go on and say what was wrong. Miss Kane had said to work and work until a picture was above reproach;

now he could see the wisdom of that. If it had just been a little better, he might have sold it!

As he stood wishing that the strange man had told what was wrong, Joseph saw Daphne Haley enter briskly, smiling at him as at an old friend. He was accustomed to being shunned by people not of his own race, or, if noticed at all, only to be called "Dago"; he heard that often enough at school, and nobody knew how it hurt,—as if Italians weren't as good as any one. They did not make personal remarks anyway; they were too polite. Daphne came toward him.

"Hello, Joe! Are people noticing your picture?" Daphne wanted to know.

Her keen interest in his work Joseph always found gratifying. "Yes; everybody looks at it. One man said it was a good subject, but —'amatchure'—something like that. And he'd like to own it if it was done better." Joseph was faintly embarrassed over the word he couldn't quite get.

"Just keep after it until it is right, Joe. What would you do first to improve it?" Daphne asked in her business-like way.

"I was thinking maybe the things in the window ought to—stand out more. The old lady is awful shabby, and the things she wants should be awful bright and pretty."

"Yes ——" Daphne agreed absently. She was wondering about Joseph's speech. How could she tell him, tactfully, for he was painfully sensitive, that it would count against him? "Yes—when you made the shadow so plain, that indicates a strong light, so the gay things should be gayer and more desirable." Daphne tapped her fingers on her purse, a proceeding which seemed to produce results immediately.

"Joseph," she commanded suddenly, "take that picture home now and work on it. This is only the first day of the exhibit; you have a week. Get it back before the end of the week, —as soon as you can, without hurrying too much. You might make the old lady's hand on her cane a little more knotted and gnarled. It would be more convincing. Make the pretty things bright and alluring; you can't overdo it in this particular picture. Bring it back when you're sure you can't do any more to it."

Carefully Joseph lifted the picture down, hunted up a newspaper in which to wrap it, and carried it home, where he made the dainty things in the window to stand out in a tempting array of color, and brought out the swollen veins on the woman's hand.

On Wednesday when he hung it again, he knew it was better, and was glad he had mentioned to Betty, when she was in the store, that it was ready to display. He had told her to tell her sister, and hoped Daphne Haley would see it soon. He stood about for a time, thinking she might appear, but finally gave up and returned to the store, where his uncle scolded him for his long absence.

"You t'ink I sell pictures or fruit, Joe? I sell *fruit*—no starve," Nicholas Campagna remarked significantly.

But Joe scarcely heard; he was wondering when he should see Daphne Haley and what she would say,—and whether the picture ever would sell.

The week passed, however, and no lover of art seemed to feel that he could not live without Joseph's picture. On the last day of the

exhibit, as Joseph reluctantly gave up hope, Daphne stopped in the store to see him.

"I'm sorry it didn't sell, Joseph, but very few did, you know. It's much better, since you worked on it. Grace Kane and I were talking over what you could do with it, and she wants to send it to a fashion journal—if you'll let her—for a cover-design. It would be something different from what they're using; they always seem to have a smartly-dressed woman holding a Russian greyhound. Miss Kane will write the sort of note that will help sell it. Are you willing to try?"

"Sure," Joe replied awkwardly. "She knows more about it than I do. My mother makes fun of me for not sellin' it," he added.

Mentally, Daphne added to the bare statement. They probably hectorred and badgered him about it, until life was not worth living. Miss Jameson had said that parents always objected to having their children encouraged if they showed talent for painting.

"Don't be disappointed if it doesn't sell, Joe. It's only a chance," Daphne warned as she departed.

The following three weeks seemed like three years to Joe, who, in his ignorance, had supposed there might be a letter of acceptance or rejection in three days. He decided that the picture was lost, or that Miss Kane had forgotten to send it; and wished he had the courage to ask about it.

Eventually, however, after the three weeks of doubting and hoping and explaining to a taunting family, an important-looking, long, thin envelope came to Joseph's uncle's store, and Joe pulled out something long and green that said, "Pay to the order of Joseph Campagna—Forty Dollars" ! Everything seemed to swim and have a queer, bluish look, and part of the time the figures looked like \$04. His first impulse, after things began to stay in their assigned places, instead of moving around in that queer way, was to tell Daphne Haley. She would not be home until dinner-time. Two hours to put in, waiting on absurd customers who considered fruit and vegetables important when nothing in the world mattered but something long and green that said, "Pay to the order of Joseph Campagna—Forty Dol-

lars " ! Several times he took the envelope out of his pocket, to be sure that was what it said, and when his uncle came in, and later his twelve-year-old sister, Joseph merely looked at them—and said nothing. Daphne Haley should hear it first.

Confidently this time he went to the Haleys' home, and asked for Miss Daphne Haley. After all, Daphne had come home early, and was in her studio, so that her mother had to call her to come down.

Joe's eyes were eloquent as he held out the letter and the check to the girl who greeted him. He was sure now of approval, and had forgotten his shabbiness and halting tongue.

" Good! I thought it would sell, Joe. Oh, I'm just as pleased as if I had sold one myself! I'm just as glad as you are! Did you call up Miss Kane? What did your mother say? " Daphne was almost beside herself. " Oh, the letter, yes. " She took the letter Joe held out, and read it with sparkling eyes.

" A little out of our line of covers, but for that very reason we are taking it. We prefer

something a little more cheerful as a rule. We enclose a check, which we hope will be satisfactory, and trust we may hear from you again."

"It's too good to be true, Joe, and remember it's partly luck. Artists don't start that way; they work and slave and try and fail over and over again. Don't think you'll get a check every time. And, Joe, if you don't mind my saying it, spend the money on more lessons. Make every success bring you another," Daphne counseled, as Joseph took the check and the letter and started to leave.

Daphne watched him as he walked down the street. She frowned slightly. She had a real plan for Joseph's future, if only he weren't so careless of his speech and appearance. She sighed as she mounted the stairs to her own studio. Joseph had so much to learn besides art,—and did not realize it. Then she smiled happily, as the vision of something long and green came before her eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII

JIMMY CREATES A JOB

ON the last Saturday in June, Jimmy sat in a deep window of the living-room, watching the rain. Norma had started to sew, but found it too dark, and so listened idly to her mother's playing.

"Aunt Alice, will Uncle want to drive to Portland to-morrow if it is raining? I don't want him to think he has to, just because he promised," Jimmy stated.

Before replying, Mrs. St. Clair turned over a sheet of music she was about to play. "If it isn't raining too hard, he won't mind, I guess. Are you very anxious to go?"

"Oh, I always feel that the next visit I make to Portland I surely will find that missing box. It *must* be on the premises and in the house. Aunt Selina said Mother was saving for my education, and naturally I'd like to know what's in the box, so I can make my plans. Next year will be my last, you know.

The Hohlers are willing to buy the house, but I can't bring myself to sell it while that box is in it." There was a baffled look on Jimmy's usually serene face as he spoke.

"Don't worry, Jimmy; just be thankful you know the Hohlers are nice, honest people you can trust. If they find it, they'll tell you. Of course, if they sold it again ——" She broke off at the thought of all the complications that would create.

"Let's each think of some place it might be," Norma put in. "Then to-morrow we'll have something to work on, when we get there."

"I can't think of any more, I'm sure," her mother returned.

"Usually Aunt Selina told me where she put the box, when she changed its hiding-place," Jimmy continued, "and she did have some funny ones—like the bottom of the bread-box, and in a flour-sack, and between the covers of a book that had come apart, and in the umbrella-stand."

Norma laughed at the list of places. "Well, that gives us some idea of her hiding-places."

"We'll simply have to find that box tomorrow," Jimmy pronounced, with determination.

Morning dawned clear and fair, and Mr. St. Clair said they might as well drive to Portland as anywhere, and that he rather enjoyed hunting for the box.

On the way Jimmy repeated what little he knew of the contents.

"Mother was a teacher, you know," he began, "and she had a little money saved when she was married. Uncle Arthur says she put most of it in fake stock. She wouldn't tell any one what it was, because she did not want them to criticize if it didn't prove profitable. She said she would tell them when the firm made good.

"After Father died, Aunt Selina came to live with us, and then, when Mother died, Aunt Selina still stayed with me. She had an insurance annuity her husband had left, and the house was my father's. Uncle Arthur said the stock was probably oil or gold or some other wildcat stuff, but Aunt Selina said Mother had more sense, and that whatever Mother

bought was from reliable men, anyway, whether they made good or not. There was about enough money in a bank somewhere for a year of college."

"Do you remember your mother, Jimmy?" Norma asked.

Jimmy looked off into space, as if trying to recall her memory, then slowly shook his head. "No. I was only three years old when she died."

The combined efforts of the three St. Clairs and Jimmy, to say nothing of the Hohlers, failed to produce the mysterious black box. They examined baseboards and clocks and the springs of a sofa and two chairs, among other things, and finally gave up the search. The ride home was a silent one, during which Jimmy tried to forget the matter.

On Monday morning the boy found himself again at the Gorham Steel, working as assistant timekeeper. It was a busy summer, and men were hard to get. The plant lay on the outskirts of the city, opposite rows and rows and rows of hideous houses, which belonged to the company, and were occupied by their em-

ployees. There was much dissatisfaction and constant laying-off of men and hiring of new ones.

In Jimmy's mind, as he surveyed the ugly surroundings, blackened by smoke from the steel mill, was his dream of some day "turning things to account."

"Mr. Taylor," he said one day to his chief, who had stopped for a word with the boy, "it seems to me those five acres the company is holding," he nodded in the direction of a weed-grown field, "could be used by the employees for truck-gardens. I understand the company is simply holding the land in case they should want to build on it, or run in tracks and sidings."

"Why, the men *could* use it, I suppose," Mr. Taylor replied, "but it's only clay—discarded farm, you know, like all the land near the city."

"There's no objection to clay for most vegetables, if it can be broken up. At home we had clay in the back yard, but we dumped on five or six loads of foundry sand, to keep the soil broken, and had wonderful gardens for

several years. We raised everything we wanted. The Gorham has plenty of sand from its own foundry. The land could be ploughed up by a tractor in a day or so, and, with plenty of the sand the company is hauling around, trying to dispose of, those five acres would be a garden in a few weeks," Jimmy explained seriously.

"If you want me to, I'll speak about it to the manager, Mr. Downey," Taylor offered, looking at Jimmy curiously.

"It seems to me it would be worth while," Jimmy answered slowly, casting about for possible objections. "I don't see why the company should mind."

Three days later, with no small amount of satisfaction, Jimmy read the typewritten notices which were posted about the huge plant. "Any one desiring free garden space in the company's lot, apply to the superintendent's office. Land will be partially ready for planting."

The next morning a tractor, rented by the company, was at work, turning up the soil which had lain useless for years. Immediately

after, the company's trucks began hauling the foundry sand, depositing it on the newly-turned furrows. A harrow followed, breaking the clods and allowing the sand to filter through. There was a rush for plots, the demand increasing when the field turned almost over night from a sea of weeds to a series of neat little plots, with the owners' names and numbers appearing on boards at the sides in rows.

One morning Jimmy arrived to find Taylor watching for him. "You're elected to a new job, Jimmy Rogers, in addition to your present one. I thought you'd like it,—advisory counsel for the new Gorham Farms," he grinned. "The men like the garden idea, and we're having less trouble keeping them satisfied, as they don't want to leave their gardens. One of our Italians came in this morning wreathed in smiles; he had stopped on the way to work to look at his garden, and found his radishes had come up in four days.

"Now the men need guidance,—some one to settle their disputes and answer their questions. Does the job appeal to you?" Taylor asked.

“You guessed it, Mr. Taylor,” Jimmy conceded. “I’ll enjoy having a finger in it.”

“The company is pleased with the way it’s working out, and they want things to run smoothly, so you’re chief diplomat.”

“Then I’m free to tell the men not to fill their plots up with lettuce. Every one’s planting lettuce, and there will be nothing else if they aren’t stopped. I’d like to have them try for two crops, too—some of the early things, and then corn or potatoes later.” Jimmy was enthusiastic over the job he had created for himself.

He loved to watch the men hurry over at noon after lunch, to see what had sprouted the night before, and to hear them boast about their superior knowledge of farming. More than one man counted every sprout until things had progressed to where it was no longer possible.

Jimmy felt the joy of creating; of making waste land to blossom and contribute to the needs of man; and, mirrored in the hearts of a hundred men, he saw his own joy reflected. They, too, knew the thrill, the feeling of power

at having called into being even a fuzzy-topped carrot, an unromantic blade of onion, or a homely-leafed radish. The magic of his idea entranced him, and he loved to close his eyes and visualize the five acres of forlorn weeds that had been, then to open them and see the fruitfulness of the same field. Jimmy loved to reclaim, to turn waste into profit, for he was a born efficiency engineer.

There was a natural comradeship between him and the men, with whom he rejoiced over the green things they had called into existence. Only one who has created something, knows the joy it brings; and what each man felt for his little plot, Jimmy felt for the whole five acres.

There were days when there was no hoeing or weeding to be done, but the love of growing things, of producing, that is in every human heart, though sometimes buried deep, drew the men to their plots. There were friendly arguments,—and arguments not so friendly, when Jimmy had to intervene and convince two men that they were both right.

As he compared the plots, Jimmy was sure

that things grew better for the Italians; it seemed as if the love they bestowed on growing things was returned many fold.

Sometimes he had to beg the men to thin things, so ignorant were they of the necessity for space. "They will be twisted and dwarfed, Ivan, if they aren't thinned to six inches apart," he told a Russian. "Carrots should not be closer than six inches. They will be fine, if you will thin and transplant them."

"Ivan no room put," laconically.

"You haven't space? Well, give some to Tony. His garden is not full. He neglected to plant the space left when his radishes were gone."

Ivan shook his head. "No give Tony; Tony *buy* carrot."

Tony only grinned, and Jimmy thought quickly.

"Tony, will you let him use your space if he gives you half of the carrots you raise?"

Again Tony grinned and nodded assent.

"Half the carrots, Ivan. All right? You'll get more in the end. I'm telling you right," Jimmy urged.

Rather reluctantly, as if not wholly convinced that it was the thing to do, Ivan thinned the carrots and planted them in Tony's plot, while the latter grinned, as if Fate always had favored him.

Often the children came from the near-by dingy houses and worked on their father's plots, until Jimmy learned to know them. Sometimes the mothers came, too, anxious to make the most of a thrifty plan, enjoying the walk through the rows of green on the sand-blackened soil.

At a hint from Jimmy, a water-pipe was run through the center of the five acres, and taps attached, so that hose would reach every corner during the dry spells.

Jimmy was touched when he saw some of the prosy-looking men growing flowers instead of vegetables. Later they traded flowers for lettuce and early beets.

When weeding was neglected by some of the men, Jimmy had each man donate a very small sum for prizes, to be given for the neatest garden, the largest carrots, the heaviest head of cabbage. The company added to the sum until

every one had an opportunity to make an entry for one of the many prizes.

At the height of the season newspaper men came, photographed the gardens, and featured the work in the paper, giving Jimmy due credit for his share in suggesting and supervising the venture.

Other factories having space available were following the example of the Gorham Steel. The disposal of the black foundry sand, which had been a real problem to the company, became a source of profit, as other factories bought it for their land.

One evening, as George Haley and Jimmy and Bert McDonald were talking "business," Jimmy declared enthusiastically, "It was the most enjoyable vacation I ever put in."

They were at the McDonald home, helping Bert connect up a new radio his father had bought.

"Remember when we laughed at Jim's idea of making money out of what other people discarded?" George queried reminiscently.

"We said it couldn't be done, and he did it," Bert returned thoughtfully.

“That isn’t what I had in mind at all,” Jimmy explained patiently. “That is only a little side-line. The real fireworks”—he paused, as if on the verge of disclosing to them his plan, and the room grew quiet—“will come later.”

“Don’t be a clam,” George reproved. “Tell us.”

But Jimmy shook his head. He had a belief, part superstition, that if a person talked too much about a thing he never accomplished it.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

WHEN Elaine's Aunt Margaret called Norma on the telephone to tell her that Mr. McDonald had died suddenly and Elaine wanted her, Norma could scarcely believe that she had heard aright. During the days and nights that followed, Norma stayed with Elaine most of the time.

Ten-year-old Gene, realizing that she was doubly orphaned now, clung to her Aunt Margaret.

Bert, just out of his first year of college, torn between grief and responsibility for his two young sisters, kept to himself.

The day after the funeral the two girls sat in Elaine's cozy pink bedroom, on the edge of the bed, Norma's arm about her friend.

"I feel so helpless, Norma; I don't know what I can do, and Bert won't be able to finish college!"

"You'll find some way to get along, Elaine.

There are loads of things to do," Norma comforted rather vaguely.

"There won't be anything but the house, you know," Elaine reminded, the tears welling to her eyes as she thought of her own inability to do anything.

"Now, don't you worry about that," Norma charged, taking Elaine's hand in her own. "It doesn't have to be settled this very day, or for a week, for that matter. Come on out for a walk. It's glorious outdoors, and maybe we'll think of something for you to do."

Listlessly Elaine selected a light wrap, and followed Norma down the stairs. In the living-room sat Aunt Margaret, frowning over an unoffending book. Instinctively the girls knew that she was worrying.

As they went out the front door, Elaine whispered: "Aunt Margaret has never done anything. We'll have to take care of her."

"Mother will think of some plan, dearie. You know she just enjoys such problems. I told you about Blue Bell; Mother figured out what she should do. She can take you and your aunt and the house and make a fortune

out of you, without your knowledge and consent and against your better judgment," Norma asserted confidently. "Problems are like algebra to her, and she always finds the value of x ."

By this time Elaine was smiling, for there was something contagious about her friend's optimism. "I suppose something will turn up," Elaine agreed. "Other people find things to do."

As in the case of many problems and worries, the solution was to be found in a most unexpected way. The girls had gone on their favorite walk to the park and back to Norma's house, where Mrs. St. Clair had insisted on calling up Aunt Margaret and having her bring Gene and Bert for dinner.

The sympathetic Katy had made both the table and food particularly attractive, and the change of surroundings was good for the McDonalds. As they sat down, Norma wondered how they would carry on a conversation with people so recently bereaved; the talk shouldn't be too serious, and it certainly shouldn't be funny. Alone with Elaine, whom

she had known so long and understood so well, it was easy.

The matter of talk, however, took care of itself.

"How is your farm coming, Jimmy?" Bert asked.

"Everybody's still enthusiastic," Jimmy returned, "and that's what counts. There's a good deal of rivalry, and a good many remarks if a man's plot shows too many weeds. I'd like to experiment on a small farm of my own. Every time I see that Stratford place I think of what could be made of it,—and it probably would sell for a song."

"I wish we had it," Bert remarked thoughtfully.

"You couldn't *hire* me to live in it," Aunt Margaret objected promptly. "Why, it's haunted!"

"We could rent the house we're in," Elaine offered, quite as if her aunt had not spoken. As a matter of fact, the timidity of the latter lady was so taken for granted that the others overlooked it. Aunt Margaret objected to boat-rides and big cities, and frequently heard

burglars, who always escaped somehow before any one could locate them.

“Why not get an option on the place, Bert?” Mr. St. Clair suggested. “If you want me to, I’ll inquire whether any one pays taxes on it. Unless I’m badly mistaken, the house is held by the city for back taxes, which amount to more than most people want to pay. I remember hearing some one say the windows were nearly all broken, and the plumbing and fixtures had been stolen. Tramps get in occasionally. It would cost something to put it in shape, but since it’s on the State road, I should think it would be worth more.”

“What is the story about it, anyway, Mother?” Norma inquired, turning to her mother, who smiled in an amused way.

“Yes, tell us,” Gene chimed in, shivering with delight at the possibility of a ghost story.

“They say Garland Stratford built it for his bride-to-be, who was a giddy young thing, he was much older, and not handsome, but—well, very much in love with the girl. He was showing a party of friends through the house, when he overheard the girl in the next room

tell her friends she would never marry him if it were not for his money. He disappeared after that; he wouldn't sell the place, agents said. Now they say the living-room door closes every night at two o'clock, and no one wants to live in the house, though it is—or was—worth a great deal of money.”

“His ghost objects to having any one live in it,” Aunt Margaret declared, for she was part Irish, and loved her ghosts and fairies and superstitions.

Mrs. St. Clair suppressed a smile. “I understand the girl was standing in the living-room when she made the remark.”

“Did you know her, Mother?” Norma inquired eagerly.

“I knew them both slightly,” Mrs. St. Clair replied.

“Garland Stratford built the house out there, because he believed the town would grow that way,” Mr. St. Clair observed. “He was a little previous, but with the State road and the street-car line it should build up, if some one would start it.”

“I'd just as soon be the one,” Bert declared.

“Bert, you’d better think twice about risking your life in a house where a door closes at two in the morning,” Jimmy admonished sternly, fixing his twinkling eyes on Bert.

“Try to scare me with a ghost! I’d just as soon sleep there alone, if it happened to be convenient.” He glanced at his aunt, who looked slightly horrified. “I take after the other side of the house,” he added.

Elaine was sitting round-eyed with interest, and Mrs. St. Clair thought it might be time to change the subject. “I notice the Bakers are back from Florida, and are looking for a house. There’s been so little building, I’m afraid they’ll have a time finding anything suitable,” she opined.

Aunt Margaret straightened up. “If we had any place to go, we could let them have ours during the summer. The income would be worth considering.”

“I’m going to have chickens and a cow,” Bert teased, quite as if the matter were settled.

“Oh, if only it weren’t haunted; there’s always some drawback,” Aunt Margaret sighed.

“If some one would live in it a while, and

take away its reputation of being haunted, it would be worth more," Mr. St. Clair pointed out.

"I dare you, Bert," Jimmy challenged, as he saw Aunt Margaret's look of doubtful longing. "There are rooms and rooms and rooms; I don't think one person could count them."

"What real objection is there to a self-closing door, anyway?" Bert demanded. "Can't a door close if it wants to? It undoubtedly has a good substantial reason for closing, if people had brains enough to figure it out. As for the ghost, who ever heard of a ghost hurting any one?"

"It may be only hearsay about the door," Mrs. St. Clair encouraged.

Jimmy was silent, for he knew that several fellows had slept there to try it out, and the door closed and a light had seemed to pass through the room. The fellows were thoroughly skeptical before going, so Jimmy knew they were not imagining it.

"A person could close the door at night and lock it," was all he said aloud.

"Don't let us miss such a good chance, Aunt

Margaret," Elaine coaxed. "The Bakers can give us a good price for our house, and when they go South in the winter, we can move back into it. We should know, by that time, whether the Stratford house was ghost headquarters or not."

"Well—we might try it," their aunt conceded. "We ought to get an option for very little, and that would mean cheap rent, and a big profit on the house if we bought it and fixed it up."

"Do you mind if I call up the Bakers now?" Bert inquired.

"Well—I suppose not," Aunt Margaret consented reluctantly.

Without waiting for his aunt to change her mind, Bert called up the hotel where the Bakers were staying temporarily, and in a few minutes returned with the announcement that the Bakers would be over in the morning to look at the house.

Before the McDonalds left Norma's home, Mr. St. Clair had promised to find out about the Stratford place, and let them know.

As it turned out, the terms were unusually

easy, because the place had not been in demand, was so far out, and larger than the average family wanted to heat. An option of two hundred dollars would hold it for six months. There was nearly three thousand dollars due in back taxes, which price would buy the place.

Two weeks later the McDonalds were established in the Stratford mansion, whose dignity was hardly impaired by the name "The Haunted House." The Bakers had taken the house in town until "around Christmas." Gene, round-eyed and mischievous, poked around the house, not too far from the rest, in an enjoyable state of excitement. "It's more fun if there *is* a ghost," she declared, and then amended, "at least in the daytime."

"We'll clean and clean and clean—and then buy it. It's a grand house—under the dirt and dust." Gene was counting the many fireplaces.

They "cleaned and cleaned and cleaned," as Gene had suggested, while Bert built fires in the many fireplaces, to dry it out thoroughly. On Saturday they moved in, and Bert worked

all the evening replacing broken panes of glass; most of the windows had been boarded up.

“Now suppose we close that sliding door and leave it closed,” Bert suggested before they went to bed.

“That wouldn’t be any fun,” Gene objected, feeling that she was about to be cheated. “Leave it open, so we can see whether there is a ghost. I’m ten years old, and I’ve never seen one!”

“Aunt Margaret is fifty, and she never has, either,” Bert laughed.

Every single McDonald resolved to stay awake that night and listen for the closing of the door, which Bert had left open. Every single McDonald, dead tired from moving things and cleaning and carrying and climbing stairs, fell asleep inside of half an hour. At two in the morning the door rumbled shut, evidently, for the next morning it was undeniably as closed as a door could be. There was no argument about *that*.

At nine o’clock the family grouped about it solemnly.

“We should have closed it—to save the

ghost getting up just to amuse us and live up to his reputation," Bert argued.

"That's no fun," Gene declared, trying to feel scared, but, instead, delighted at the strange situation.

"I'm not going to stay here another night," Aunt Margaret declared, though she failed to state just where she *would* stay.

"You know very well, Aunt Margaret, you would have been as disappointed as Gene if the door had not closed," Bert accused.

His aunt was obliged to smile with the others.

"Now, after all, what harm did he do?" Bert asked coaxingly. "Do we mind opening that door in the morning? We can take turns. Gene, it's your turn to-morrow morning to open the door. Now don't forget," he ordered with mock severity.

Gene grinned, pleased with the commission, while Bert rolled back the door, and they all looked in at the undisturbed living-room.

But Gene was doomed to disappointment, for the next morning the door remained open, just as it had been left.

“Some one said it never closed on Sunday nights,” Aunt Margaret averred.

“Then Gene may close it Tuesday mornings. Justice and liberty for all,” Bert declared grandly. “And in the meantime, breakfast, please!”

On Tuesday morning Gene had the pleasure of opening the wide Flemish-oak door which had mysteriously closed during the night. Aunt Margaret had heard the rumble, had looked at the clock beside her bed, and, sure enough, it was twenty minutes past two.

“I think Sunday nights he must have an engagement with one of his spook friends,” Bert ventured.

“I wonder if it is Stratford himself who closes the door,” Aunt Margaret mused.

“Now, Auntie, we don’t even know that he’s dead!” Bert reminded, patting her shoulder. “Anyway, Grandfather McDonald once saved Garland Stratford’s father from drowning, so why should his ghost object to the McDonald tribe? He’d be pleased, as I see it, knowing how we’re fixed financially.

“I don’t believe in ghosts, so it will have to

be something mechanical for me," Bert concluded, emphatically.

"I suppose there's a perpetual-motion clock wound up inside there," his aunt countered.

"If there is, the McDonalds are rich this minute, Auntie," he teased. "Perpetual motion is awfully scarce, and if we find any of it lying around, we can get rich in no time."

They laughed, and went to breakfast, but Elaine was rather silent.

"It doesn't close in the daytime," she pointed out. "That looks suspicious."

"*Et tu, Brute?*" Bert queried. "I thought you were on good terms with ghosts. We'll simply look for a night-time explanation," he argued imperturbably.

"I wish we hadn't moved into the heathenish place," Aunt Margaret observed. "No one will want to buy it, when we can't truthfully say it isn't haunted. *I'm* for moving out."

"We can't afford that," Bert returned quietly.

There was no answer to that argument, they knew, so each decided to treat the matter lightly, and help allay one another's fears.

Bert was working down-town all day, and trying to do the hundred and one things which simply must be done about the house, working with limited tools and limited money. At night he would fall into bed, resolved to stay awake, but too tired physically and mentally to keep his resolution.

Even in the daytime the very silence of the door seemed spooky now. Then Jimmy had dropped in and found Bert working under difficulties, had driven back to the St. Clair home for tools, and returned to help on a dozen odd jobs.

“Let’s sleep beside the door, Bert,” Jimmy suggested, when he was urged to stay all night.

“Suits me,” Bert agreed. “We can talk and keep one another awake. No—I know a better way than that. I’ll set the alarm for one-forty-five.”

“Oh, don’t be so foolish!” Aunt Margaret begged, gasping at their audacity.

“I suppose we are taking our lives in our hands,” Bert stated solemnly, winking at Jimmy, “but there are several things I want

to ask that ghost. I'll be polite, Auntie. I promise you that."

At one-forty-five the alarm went off, and the three sleepers up-stairs crept to the top of the stairs and waited.

"One night we put a chair against the door, and of course it did not close, so Aunt Margaret said that proved it was a ghost and not a person," Bert related.

"Sounds logical," Jimmy laughed, "but the real explanation might be, too."

They waited, yawning and growing less talkative, until two o'clock, then two-ten. Gene leaned over against her aunt and fell asleep. There was no electricity yet, only a dim lamp burned.

At two-fifteen there was a low rumbling sound that grew louder and louder, and finally, as it reached its maximum of noise, the wide door rolled shut, ending with a satisfied click, as if it had done its duty.

"The interurban truck!" Bert announced, as Aunt Margaret rose to her feet, and called, "Bert! Are you all right? Answer me!"

Jimmy went to the foot of the stairs. "It's



THE THREE CREPT TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS AND WAITED.

Page 288.

only the interurban truck that rolls through here about two o'clock every morning. It's the biggest thing on wheels, and evidently the only thing heavy enough to disturb the equilibrium of an otherwise well-behaved door."

"Why doesn't it close on Sunday night?" Aunt Margaret demanded.

"Because the interurban doesn't take a load out on Sunday, Auntie dear," Bert teased.

"Is that *all*?" Elaine scoffed.

"I'm not so sure," Aunt Margaret began.

"Then you may sit up to-morrow night until the big truck goes through," Bert offered generously. "Hereafter I sleep in bed."

"I'm cold," his aunt returned, wrapping her kimono around her more closely, as she skillfully changed the subject.

Gene never forgave them for letting her sleep through the great moment when they discovered the mechanical ghost who worked in league with the living-room door. She complained bitterly next morning when they told her, dramatically, what had happened.

"Oh! I've got an idea right out of thin air!" Elaine cried. "The Haunted House

Tea-Room. There's plenty of traffic past here on the boulevard. We'll furnish the extra rooms, too, and share our ghost with the tourists!" she declared generously.

A few days later they had devised a sign, which Daphne had insisted on decorating with a ghost eating a waffle. Norma had told her of the discovery, and of the intention of the McDonalds to exploit the ghost who had enabled them to buy a fine home for a song.

Mr. St. Clair had taken the first mortgage for the full amount, providing they agreed to live in it for one year—thus reinstating it as a respectable, tenanted dwelling.

Tourists saw the sign, "The Haunted House Tea-Room," and argued with themselves that they had to stop somewhere, and they might just as well see this haunted house. Most of them stopped for waffles or sandwiches, and inquired about the ghost and lodgings. Aunt Margaret told the story with many flourishes, but never told the solution of the mystery, unless people insisted—which they seldom did. The average person resents any explanation of a mystery he has discovered; for one person

who loves a logical explanation, there are one thousand who prefer the wall of mystery. Most people took it for granted that it never had been solved, and, when they saw the attractive rooms and tasted the superlative cooking, decided to stay.

In September the number of tourists fell off, and Bert insisted that Elaine must go back to school. He, of course, would work. The income for the summer had been like a gift of Providence, and they dreaded the fall months that stopped it.

At school Elaine found the girls curious about the Haunted House. There were three from the country, who appeared particularly interested, and finally told Elaine why. They rode back and forth every day, and it was tiresome, especially in bad weather; they wondered whether they might stay there for the winter months, from Monday afternoon until Friday morning, going home, of course, for the weekends.

Without waiting to consult her aunt, so eager was she to secure this income, Elaine told them they might come. Her aunt was de-

lighted, and worked out a plan which would be economical to the girls, as well as profitable to herself. They were to do their own cooking for the few days they were to be there; the room rent was to cost them just what they were paying to commute—and they saved themselves the tiresome trip. Aunt Margaret had applied a business principle which seldom fails; there must be an advantage to both parties. Other country girls heard of the arrangement, and before long every room was taken.

Then, just as the country house, as they called it, was beginning to justify its existence, they began to worry about the city home, which would be vacant when the Bakers left, some time around the first of the year. That would mean three or four months' loss of rent, right when they needed the money so badly, and expenses were so high.

But, like most troubles worried over in advance, this one never arrived. The Bakers decided that they would prefer to keep the house until April, rather than move their furniture out to storage and then hunt for another place. The McDonalds sighed with relief

when Mr. Baker telephoned his decision, asking if it was all right with them.

“My! I’m glad there are ghosts,” Gene announced contentedly, for some of the financial worries had penetrated her young brain.

“But there aren’t any, Gene, dear,” Elaine objected.

“I’m glad, anyway,” Gene returned pleasantly.

“Well, ‘glad away,’ Pollyanna,” Elaine laughed. “You win!”

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW HIGH

NEWBURY HIGH opened that year, with a new principal, as an "experimental school," for the state had decided to try out new theories which were said to be proving practical in other States. Mary Effie Carr, a noted educationalist, was chosen to "conduct the experiment."

"Oh, aren't we lucky!" Norma cried as she met Elaine in the locker-room on the first day of school. "It's bound to be something new and different."

"But we might not like it at all," Elaine reminded, with her usual Scotch caution.

"'Elective courses' sounds promising," Norma returned.

When Mary Effie Carr, formerly on the State board of education, stood on the stage before the assembly, there was the intense silence which only curiosity can create. Something was about to happen.

Jimmy had reported to Norma that the boys

did not like having a woman principal; "too much like a grammar-school stunt," they had objected.

As Miss Carr faced the seven hundred pupils in the school, every student was studying her, trying to measure her ability, her character, by the small head with its smooth brown hair, serious eyes, and sensitive mouth. She looked very human.

"I'm not going to bore you with a long speech, young friends. I'm going right to the point. I'm glad to be here; I want to know you all personally as soon as possible, and I hope you won't be sorry I came." She smiled. "I feel sure most of you will rejoice when I tell you that we are going to establish a new order of things." There was a stirring and scuffling at this remark.

"We aren't going to say 'study this and study that,' regardless of whether a subject appeals to you. We've decided it is as sensible to say that every man of forty-five is qualified to be President of the country as to say every student will make a Latin scholar. Most of you have read of the new State ruling which

allows the school more scope in its curriculum. This is going to be one of the first schools to take advantage of the new order."

A storm of applause broke, and Miss Carr smilingly waited until it had finished. "I'm glad you appreciate it," she approved, "because there was a long, hard fight to put the measure through, and we feel important and modern,—and, yes, terribly responsible in availing ourselves of the new freedom."

Glancing over the assembly of interested faces, she continued: "I am told that of the seven hundred pupils here, nearly half are freshmen. That means that only a very small percentage graduate. We're going to stop thinking the fault is with the pupils, and begin blaming the system. Naturally there are two or three conditions. Each pupil is to take four subjects, as formerly; we want the written consent of your parents to your choice of subjects, and we recommend that pupils planning college-entrance, keep college-entrance requirements in mind when choosing subjects.

"The school-board has discussed this matter thoroughly, and we have come to the conclu-

sion that the pupil will gravitate to the things he can do best; and the things he can do most easily will indicate what should be the field of his endeavor.”

There was more deafening applause before she could continue, though most of the pupils knew only that it meant more freedom, and gave no thought to the real issue.

“Classes this week will be ‘experimental.’ They are listed on all the bulletin-boards. For the rest of the week, go to the classes that appeal to you, talk things over with your parents and at least one teacher, and be ready next Monday to start on your regular year’s work. The lessons this week will be concerned chiefly with the *use* of a subject after you have learned it,—how your knowledge will be applied in the work you may do after leaving school,” Miss Carr finished.

The air was electric when the bell sounded to dismiss assembly. Out in the great hall, the bulletin-boards became the center of excited, talkative groups.

When she could get near enough, Norma squeezed Elaine’s arm. “Oh, isn’t it great!”

"We aren't dreaming, are we?" Elaine demanded.

"Pessimist!" Norma laughed. "I'm going to take English and Spanish and French and typewriting, and no mathematics and no science," she announced gleefully.

"That makes four," Elaine laughed. "Why typewriting?"

"Oh, I'd love to run a typewriter, and maybe I'll work in Dad's bank in the summer."

After school the girls met in the small park opposite the school.

"Oh, girls, it isn't like going to school, is it?" Norma cried.

"It's like starting to be whatever we've planned, or haven't planned," Betty approved, jumping up to a limb and "chinning" herself in sheer joy. "And I'm to help Miss Burdick one period a day with gym work, and get credit for it. Miss Burdick asked Miss Carr, and she said the practical experience was invaluable, since I wanted to be a gym teacher."

"I don't see what you would learn that you don't know," Carma objected.

"Well, Miss Burdick let me hang around

gymnasium all the morning while she arranged classes. One girl was so short-winded that she will only be allowed to do certain of the exercises. They're going to have a special talk over her, and recommend singing lessons for breathing, and possibly no regular school work for a year—just outdoor life. And you remember that Lola Jackson who cried in sewing-class? ”

Carma nodded, all interest now.

“It was her eyes, I guess. Miss Burdick found she couldn't aim straight, and the ball always went to the left of the place she threw for. No wonder she cried when she tried to focus on French hemming! She didn't even know she needed glasses. Then Miss Burdick told me to notice that the strongest girls have large nostrils,—which are ‘the outward and visible sign’ of a good pair of lungs,—which in turn mean a good heart, for pumping. You see,” Betty concluded, “there are plenty of things I don't know!”

“I notice there are going to be speakers every week,” Helen Hartland contributed. “We decide which division we want to attend

—literary, art, business, or technical. There will be a speaker for each group, and a different one every week, to help us decide what we are qualified for.”

“They don’t need to tell me,” Betty declared. “I’d turn a handspring right now, if it were dignified for an assistant gym teacher!”

The girls all laughed, for Betty’s happiness was contagious.

“It seems to me you’re kind of lucky, Betty,” Norma began.

“I know it,” Betty agreed cheerfully. “Things just get up on their hind legs and walk to me, when they find I want them—like my gym school, and the playground, and helping Miss Burdick. It’s luck, you can’t call it anything else.”

“Mother says, ‘The things that are for thee will gravitate to thee,’ ” Norma offered. “That’s Emerson, I think.”

“They don’t gravitate until you know what they are,” Carma objected. “Betty’s been so sure, and has kept telling the world all about it,—no wonder she’s lucky. They say you’ll get everything you want if you yell loud

enough for it, and I don't think Emerson said it."

Betty laughed with the rest. "You're both right, so far as I'm concerned."

The following day registration broke all records of the high school. Discouraged pupils, who had flunked in from one to four subjects, came back to study what they knew they could pass creditably.

Andrew Cole returned to study chemistry and physics and mathematics. Norma heard him rejoicing, "I can spend all the time I like in the laboratory. Mr. Gray said so!"

It was odd to see him rejoicing over studying anything; he who had always stood with a blank expression on his face in most classes.

Classes had to be cut down to half the usual time allowed, to accommodate those who returned for special work, and Miss Carr appealed to the pupils to rise to the occasion.

"I have a reputation at stake, pupils. Now you must justify me. In effect, I have said that you could do twice as well studying the subjects of your choice. You must prove it, by making a better-than-usual grade in half

the time, because the popularity of the system has brought back more pupils than we can accommodate. Are you with me?" she finished, as she faced them in the assembly room.

A storm of applause seemed to indicate that they were. The standings at the end of that first month proved it.

It was Daphne who urged Joseph to return to school for drawing and painting instruction, and for the personal-efficiency class Miss Carr had instituted; and it was Daphne who went to Miss Carr and told her of Joseph's talent and problems.

"I'm looking ahead, Miss Carr. Next year I plan to give up my position and start to college. Joseph could easily do the illustrating I do for the daily advertisements, but you will see that his speech and personal appearance are going to handicap him. I'm not sure the firm would consider taking him in. It's only in stories that such handicaps are overlooked—chiefly in the movies!"

A stream of people stopped at the door of Miss Carr's office, and, seeing her absorption in

the attractive visitor, passed on. Miss Carr was always so busy!

“I can’t tell Joseph that he must appear well-groomed, and that he must speak properly if he is to make a good impression. I wonder if you can manage ——” Daphne looked appealingly at Miss Carr, who was making a mental note to the effect that Miss Daphne Haley was as concerned over the Italian boy as if it were her own career at stake.

Miss Carr smiled as she answered, “Yes. It may be painful to him, since you say he’s sensitive, but I’ll be tactful and give him personal instruction. I’m glad you managed to get him back; Miss Jameson mentioned that he was particularly promising.” The principal took Daphne’s hand as she rose to go. “What you told me about your plans will be confidential. Please come in again, Miss Haley.”

“Aunt Effie” was the nickname of the popular Mary Effie Carr, and occasionally “Aunt Efficiency,” since a pupil had told seriously that that was her middle name, and it seemed appropriate.

When the name reached Miss Carr’s ears,

she said she hoped it was true that a nickname meant popularity.

There were protests against Miss Carr's method, but Miss Carr stood firm. The only member of the school-board who had opposed it, called one day to attend classes and see what was being done.

"I understand," he told Miss Carr, "that one of your pupils is doing nothing but sewing—that she sits from morning until night sewing. Is that so?" There was a strong hint of disapproval in his tone.

"Yes. Catharine Boyle had left school, because her father has been ill for months, and the family bank-account will last about six months, at most. Miss Boyle shows decided ability, not only for sewing, but for designing original garments. The things she is making in class, she is selling; they are mostly children's clothes, and she is earning her living while she learns," Miss Carr explained. "Miss Thompson says in this one term the girl will learn all she can teach her. She is more than self-supporting now, and naturally we are rather proud of her."

“I see. Yes. Well—that’s different,” the old man conceded. “I’m glad to know she is learning something useful, since it is so necessary.”

Then came an exciting morning, later in the year, when Mr. Gray, the chemistry teacher, made an announcement in assembly.

“In the twelve years I’ve been teaching, I’ve never been so pleased over anything as I am this morning,” he began. “I have some wonderful news. One of my pupils has just received word from the Government that a process he discovered has been accepted by them for use in the Mint. I’m not at liberty to say what the process is, but I can tell—and take huge delight in telling—that one of my pupils, one of your number,” he repeated impressively, “has received the money offered by the Government for such a process. You may congratulate—Andrew Cole.” Mr. Gray bowed and sat down, and the students applauded until Andrew’s white face was almost purple, though a happy smile showed through.

Miss Carr spoke briefly and to the point. “We feel that Mr. Cole has more than justi-

fied the confidence we placed in his ability to decide for himself what he should study. There isn't a pupil here who hasn't as much ability along *some* line, as Mr. Cole has shown. That's how much faith I have in the law of compensation," she concluded, with a smile.

At this broad compliment the students applauded again, partly in gratitude, but chiefly out of enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXI

A LETTER FROM UNCLE HERBERT

WHEN Mr. Haley's leave of absence from his firm had expired, shortly after he had moved his family into the brick flat on Chestnut Street, the question of going back had to be settled.

"You can make just as much, or more, by fixing up this house, Walter," Mrs. Haley urged, "and save your eyesight. There are dozens of things to be done to these flats, and the improvements are bound to pay us, but if you go back to bookkeeping, you'll have no time to put on the house."

As Mrs. Haley spoke she watched her husband anxiously, her tired hands twisting nervously.

"And as long as I'm working, you haven't a thing to worry about," Betty reminded coolly.

With the exception of Betty herself, all the family laughed. To the youngest Haley,

twelve dollars looked bigger than twelve thousand was to look, later in life.

“Try it for a year, Father,” Ernest put in. “You made a good job of the other house; make this one look its best.”

“It suits me,” Mr. Haley agreed rather wistfully. “Bookkeeping is just drudgery, but there is some satisfaction in making a house over and keeping the profit yourself instead of adding it up for some one else. I’ll try it—as long as Betty’s working now,” he finished slyly.

Before September came, their Uncle Herbert wrote a long letter, acknowledging his nephew’s account of their new home. Betty and Norma were still up north at the time, but when they returned home, Betty secured permission to read the letter to her friend, for it was not just an ordinary letter that might come to any one.

“DEAR WALTER:

“First let me congratulate you on your success in making the Second Street house yield up two thousand dollars. Enclosed is a check for an equal amount, which I promised you, and am glad to send. You will notice

there is an extra thousand included. Ernest and George are each to have four hundred of it toward their college expenses; if they have enough for this year, tell them to put it toward another year. The other two hundred is for Betty, because she so promptly carried out her resolution to become a gym teacher, and because I'm sure twelve dollars a week is not enough for so valuable an instructor.

"I may say that I have always had an ungratified ambition to be related to a gym teacher. [Betty saw nothing funny in this, but considered it quite probable and reasonable.]

"As for yourself, Walter, if you have decided to continue 'reconstructing' houses, I shall be glad to double your profit on each one.

"Next summer your aunt and I plan to go to Europe, and we have talked about taking Daphne and Annette with us, deciding that they would profit by such a trip at that time. Tell them to be ready by June or July. This may necessitate some changes in their present plans, but I have in mind the fact that they will want to study somewhere next year (following the trip) at *my* expense.

"I am warning the girls about next year's plans, so they may have time to think about them. I might have made the college money available this year, but I happen to believe in a little practical work between high school and

college. The girls had their own little plans, and I was interested to see them work these out in their own way. I'm proud of what success they've had, and am sure they know better now what they want to study, and where, and *why*, than they would have a year ago. I feel it is the effort we make *ourselves* that makes us grow, and young people should stand on their own feet, at least most of the time.

"Please keep me posted as to your activities. I am always interested in the children's plans; remember I have none of my own, and yours are my next of kin.

"With love to all,

"UNCLE HERBERT."

For just three minutes Betty had felt sharp twinges of jealousy, while Daphne and Annette made lavish plans. Her two sisters going abroad while she stayed home! Then her own problem took up her mind.

"How in the world shall I spend two hundred dollars?" she demanded helplessly.

"I don't think it can be done," George pronounced solemnly. "No one person should be expected to spend a vast sum like that!"

Betty tried not to smile, but failed.

"Lots of time, Betty," Annette said.

“Think of all the things you’d like to do, and then choose the very best,” Daphne counseled wisely.

“Yes, and put the list down on paper; don’t try to work out a problem of that size in your head,” Ernest admonished with an assumed concern.

“Why! Next year there will be only Betty at home,” Mrs. Haley cried in real alarm.

“You’ll never miss the rest of us, Mother. Betty’ll talk enough for all of us,” George consoled quickly.

When Norma had read the letter and rejoiced with Betty, her thoughts flew again to Jimmy’s words. He was right! Uncle Herbert had wanted them to help themselves before he offered any assistance.

“Will Annette give up her school?” Norma inquired.

Betty put the letter away in the desk before answering, then she lowered her voice. “Don’t tell any one. She’s asked Miss Thompson to find a suitable substitute, and have her prepare especially for this work.

“You’re responsible for all the nice things

that have happened, Norm!" Betty accused, squeezing Norma until she gasped for breath, for she had not Betty's robust physique.

"I? How?" Norma inquired in surprise.

"Didn't you find Uncle Herbert for us?"

Norma's dark curls bobbed as she nodded thoughtfully. "I'm good and thankful I didn't get such a nice uncle for any one else!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECRET OF THE BLACK BOX

WHEN the Christmas holidays came, Jimmy resolved to make another thorough search of his home for the black box. The Hohlers had written that they would consider buying the house, and Jimmy, much as he needed the money for his college expenses the following year, could not bring himself to part with the home that might contain that box, together with the bank-account and whatever else might be in it.

“We’ll drive there again during the Christmas vacation, Jimmy,” Mr. St. Clair promised at breakfast one morning. “There is not much snow at present, and you and Norma will be out of school. This time we’ll have to think of something more original than clothes-closets and dresser-drawers.”

“We’ve said that every time,” Norma reminded. “I haven’t a single think left,—maybe it’s just as well.”

"We'll have to depend on inspiration this time," Jimmy contributed.

Mrs. St. Clair placed the muffins where Jimmy could reach them. "I feel instinctively that we're going to find the box on this trip."

"They say instinct is what a woman feels when she's wrong," her husband reminded her.

"Some man thought that up," Mrs. St. Clair retorted smilingly.

Without discussing the problem, the family thought a good deal about the possible hiding-place of the box during the few days that intervened between that morning and the day they visited the Portland house.

The night before they went, Mr. St. Clair said to Norma: "It seems to me that Betty would enjoy a trip of this nature, with an elusive box to be found. You might call her up, if you think she would care to come."

Norma bounded to the hall and the telephone, where she held a very satisfactory conversation with Betty.

"She says she will not only come, but will find the box," Norma reported, returning to the living-room where the others were sitting.

The next morning, when they stopped before the Haley home, Betty waltzed out with her wide smile in evidence, like a streak of sunshine on a cloudy day. "I'm glad you're going to let me be there when it's found!" she said gratefully.

"We're glad to hear that it's going to be found when you're there," Jimmy returned in the same vein.

"A heated car!" Betty stated approvingly. "The Haleys must get one."

As they neared the house in Portland, Betty cried, "I borrow the attic!"

"You've borrowed nothing," Jimmy informed her scathingly. "There isn't any attic!"

For a moment Betty had a squelched feeling, but she reacted favorably after glancing at the house. "I see an attic window!" she announced triumphantly.

"There's no entrance to it," Jimmy insisted. But Betty did not hear. "People always hide things in high places; it's human nature. I reiterate, 'I borrow the attic.'"

Fat, blonde Mrs. Hohler admitted them to

the house, smelling pleasantly of Christmas cakes. Her face was spotted with flour.

"I'm afraid we're bothering you," Mrs. St. Clair apologized, at the door.

"Not at all," Mrs. Hohler returned cordially. "Come right in. I got your card, and I know how the boy feels about that lost box. Make yourselves right at home, and go anywhere you like to look for it. It's got to be found. We've tried ourselves; I don't know where we haven't looked,—but no trace of it."

The visitors hung their wraps in the hall.

"Isn't there any way to the attic?" Norma asked, as Mrs. Hohler was starting toward the kitchen.

"There was a trap-door, but we never kept anything up there, and Aunt Selina had it papered over the last time she had papering done in that back bedroom. Aunt Selina was never one to keep junk around," Jimmy explained, "and so had no use for an attic, especially when there was nothing but a trap-door entrance."

"Did you ever see the black box after she

had the papering done?" Betty demanded keenly.

"Well——" Jimmy appeared to try to think back that far. "I'm not sure—maybe not," he admitted.

Norma got there first, partly because she knew the way and Betty did not, and Jimmy was too polite to edge past them on the narrow stair, though he was making three steps at a time. Norma caught up an umbrella which stood in the clothes-closet, and tapped on the ceiling until a hollow sound rewarded her.

"That sounds like wood," Jimmy pronounced.

"Get me a chair, Jimmy! Do something useful. I got here first, and I'm going to have the first look," Norma asserted.

Norma's parents stood in the doorway by this time, Mrs. Hohler back of them, trying to content themselves with what they heard, since only three could get in the small closet.

In her eagerness to climb on the chair Jimmy brought, Norma almost fell, but recovered her balance and poked hard at the "hollow place."

"This suspense is terrible, Norma," Betty cried in mock anguish. "You know my nerves won't stand everything!"

"Not quite, but almost," Jimmy consoled.

Norma's head and arms followed the torn wall-paper and umbrella.

"It's right here! It's right here!" she squealed delightedly, and lifted down the dustiest black box that ever eluded human owners.

It is doing Jimmy no injustice to say he grabbed it. He pried at the cover, and then remembered the key, which was still in the big secretary down-stairs.

The party hurried down the stairs, Mrs. Hohler as fast as her fat would allow, holding back the rest because she had been nearest the door and had started first. Jimmy pulled open the drawer and found the key. He turned it, and found a bank-book, which he looked at a moment, while the rest watched breathlessly.

"It's still in Mother's maiden name," he announced. "That's why we couldn't find any trace of it at the banks." He looked at Mr. St. Clair as he spoke. "Four hundred and

eighty-six dollars," he read, turning the last page.

"The interest will have doubled it, just about, by now," Mr. St. Clair stated promptly. "And the stock, Jimmy. My nerves are like Betty's; they won't stand everything," he reminded.

Betty laughed. "You have my sympathy," she declared in a falsetto tone.

Meanwhile Jimmy rather casually opened the stock certificate, for he had no idea what he was to see, and was in no hurry to display worthless paper before others.

"*Automobile* stock! Detroit! Mother taught school there!" Jimmy turned speechless after that, just trying to absorb it.

At this moment Mr. St. Clair grabbed the stock and began counting shares. "After all, Jimmy," he smiled apologetically, "I'm your trustee, and must see this."

"Why! They must be worth a fortune, aren't they, Uncle?" Jimmy faltered. "And to think Mother didn't want that box opened until I was ready for college!"

"It's worth several fortunes, son. One of

the best-paying automobile stocks ever invested in. Ten shares!" he announced. "Any *one* would keep you from starving!"

"Have you added up the back dividends, Uncle? An expert like you should have had that computed long ago!" Jimmy teased.

"I was just adding the odd pennies, to see whether they would bring you up to the millionaire class," Mr. St. Clair retorted, "but you interrupted, and I lost count, so you can wait."

"I'll wait, if you'll loan me enough money to buy us all a dinner at the Portland Hotel. Come on, Mrs. Hohler. Do whatever should be done to cakes before they are left to their own devices," Jimmy ordered. "This party is on me—if Uncle has the money with him."

"Oh, Jimmy! I'm glad you're a sensible youngster, or I should be one of the worst-worried guardians in the country. As it is, I'm going to spend the next three years showing you poorhouses and pointing out men who lost fortunes on worthless stock," Mr. St. Clair declared.

Mrs. Hohler hurried out to change her dress.

“Betty, I know just how you felt when Uncle Herbert sent you that two hundred,” Jimmy teased, as they waited for Mrs. Hohler.

“You can’t spoil my pleasure,” Betty retorted. “I’ve spent that two hundred twenty ways, and I’m going to spend it another twenty—before I really let it go!”

Mrs. Hohler reappeared, and they drove to the hotel, where Jimmy told them to order “regardless.”

“Not so fast, Jimmy,” Mr. St. Clair laughed. “I have only twenty-two dollars with me, and I need gas.”

“If you’re going to be my guardian, you’ll have to carry more money than that, or I won’t play,” Jimmy warned.

“That’s one thing that can be said for my two hundred,” Betty jibed meaningly. “There are no guardians attached. I could spend it for all-day suckers if I wanted to.”

“That would not only be childish,” Jimmy retorted loftily, “but it would prove your need of a guardian.”

“You needn’t start putting on airs with your poor friends,” Betty admonished. “We knew you when ——”

When they had ordered and eaten “regardless,” which it was not difficult to do after their long drive, there proved to be enough money for handsome boxes of candy, and they left one with Mrs. Hohler.

The ride home was a gay one, though Mr. St. Clair reminded them frequently that all the responsibility fell on him. “You haven’t had time yet, Jimmy, but you’ll think up outlandish ways of spending money,” his guardian predicted.

Shortly after nine o’clock the party reached home, and left Betty at her door. She raced into the house and looked about the living-room. “Where’s Daphne?” she demanded, seeing her favorite sister was missing.

“Up-stairs, painting,” their mother answered. “Whatever are you so excited about, child?”

“Daphne, come on down,” Betty called at the foot of the back stairs.

As Daphne appeared, her sister explained,

"I wouldn't tell what happened until you were here." She proceeded to recount the events of the day, in tantalizingly proper order, dramatizing every smallest act.

"He may be as rich as Uncle Herbert; I don't know," Betty concluded, watching for the effect on her family.

"I'm glad some one like Jimmy had such a piece of luck," Daphne pronounced. "He deserves it, and he will be sensible."

"The shares were in his mother's maiden name, too?" George inquired, and when Betty nodded, he turned to his own mother. "You're sure you haven't any automobile stock around—in your maiden name, Mother?"

Mrs. Haley shook her head and smiled slightly.

"He'll come into it when he's twenty-one, as long as there's no stipulation to the contrary," George mused. "It's lucky he's a sensible kid."

"He won't *need* to be sensible, you goose," Betty remonstrated. "That's the grand part of it!" It seemed to the youngest Haley that her family was casting aspersions on the mag-

nitude of the new fortune to which Jimmy Rogers had fallen heir, and that spoiled her story.

Pretending to be in a huff, Betty marched out into the hall, to return a moment later with the box of candy. "This is what happens commonly when one is rich," she explained, passing the box around.

The following day came a Christmas letter from Uncle Herbert. It was short, containing a cordial holiday greeting, and one other item of note.

"I am arranging to have my income tax reduced, and yours increased," he wrote, "which seems to me only fair, when you have five husky youngsters and their careers to worry about. I have put in trust an amount sufficient to guarantee you a quarterly income that will buy all the necessities of life and a few of the luxuries."

At the table Mr. Haley read the letter, and when he stopped to turn the page, Betty interrupted: "Really, life is worth living, just to see what will happen next!"

Mrs. Haley wiped away a few tears of

gratitude and relief from the financial worries of twenty years. Daphne patted her in the maternal way she always adopted toward her mother, as if their relations were reversed.

Betty cast an appraising eye over her brothers and sisters; the boys were home for the holidays, and so, Betty felt, not over-worked.

"The more of you I have to help me with the dishes, the sooner I can get over to tell Norma," she intimated.

"We have a telephone," George observed.

"A telephone is all right—sometimes—but not on an occasion such as this," Betty declared. "I'm thankful I didn't hear about Jimmy's affairs over the 'phone!"

"Go on, infant," George ordered. "Maybe the brownies will wash the dishes."

"It seems as if Uncle Herbert always does just exactly the very thing that helps most," Daphne remarked, coming out of a reverie.

At Norma's house, seven and a half minutes later, Betty told her good news. Jimmy, at the desk figuring, laid down his pencil to listen.

"My, hasn't it been a lucky year for us all!"

Betty asked. "You know, Norma, I believe there's something lucky about you!"

"About me? Why?" Norma queried in genuine surprise.

"Of course! You found our Uncle Herbert for us, and he's done oceans of helpful things, and you started Joseph's lessons,—though you nearly drowned yourself doing it,—and you were determined to find the box in the attic, even after it was sealed up with wall-paper! Don't you think she's a lucky person to have around, Jimmy?" she demanded, sure he would support any statement that favored Norma.

"Certainly, I think it's lucky to be one of Norma's friends," Jimmy responded satisfactorily.

THE END

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00020662621